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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: ANI

## Delhi top cop changed day after attack on CM

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Senior IPS officer Satish Golcha was appointed the 26th Commissioner of Delhi Police on Thursday, succeeding SBK Singh, who held the post for just 21 days. The appointment comes day after an attack on Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during a public hearing at her Civil Lines office on Wednesday. The officials, however, said that the posting had nothing to do with the attack.The Ministry of Home Affairs issued the order, officially naming Golcha, a 1992-batch officer from the Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram and Union Territories (AGMUT) cadre, to the top police post. *—PTI*

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## K'taka gives 50% discount on pending traffic fines

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

The Karnataka government will give a 50 per cent discount on the fine amount for pending cases registered in the mobile e-challan of the police department. This discount is only applicable to cases settled between 23 August and 12 September. The Bangalore Transport and Road Safety Commissioner, in his proposal in March, has requested to provide a 50 per cent discount on traffic e-challans of the Police Department to settle cases and to provide a 50 per cent discount to vehicle owners in cases registered with the Transport Department before 2018-19. *—Salar News*

## JeM launches ₹3.91B fundraiser after Op Sindoor

**JAMMU, 21 AUG**

Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) has launched a Rs 3.91 billion fundraising campaign under the guise of building over 300 mosques, in a move mirroring Lashkar-e-Taiba's decentralisation strategy, security officials revealed. Backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), JeM is using digital wallets like EasyPaisa and Sadapay, allegedly operated by founder Masood Azhar's family, to dodge global scrutiny, including from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Officials say the funds aim to sustain the group's operations and arms procurement for a decade. *—PTI*

## Kerala Cong MLA quits amid sexual harassment charge

**PATHANAMTHITTA, 21 AUG**

Kerala Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, who faces an internal party inquiry over a sexual harassment allegation by an actress, on Thursday announced his resignation as state Youth Congress president. He announced this while speaking to reporters at his residence in Adoor near here. After actress Rini Ann George accused "a young leader" of a well-known party of misbehaviour, BJP and CPI(M) were protesting against Mamkootathil and demanding his resignation.*—PTI*

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# LS lost over 84 hours amid protests, worked only for 37 hours

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The Monsoon Session, which concluded on Thursday, was heavily disrupted, leading to a loss of 84 hours of functioning time — the highest in the 18th Lok Sabha. The session, which began on 21 July, was adjourned sine die a day ahead of schedule. In its 21 sittings, the House conducted only 37 hours and 7 minutes of business.

Meanwhile, Rajya Sabha functioned for only 41 hours and 15 minutes. .

The disruptions began with the Opposition demanding a discussion on Operation Sindoor, and later escalated over calls to debate the Special Intensive Revision exercise in Bihar. Aside from discussions on Operation Sindoor, legislative activity was minimal throughout the month-long session, with frequent adjournments and walkouts dominating proceedings. Despite the turbulence, the Lok Sabha managed to pass 12 bills, including, the Merchant Shipping Bill, the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, the Manipur Appropriation (No.2) Bill, the National Sports Governance Bill, the Income-tax Bill, the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, the Indian Ports Bill and the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill. Meanwhile, the Rajya Sabha passed or returned 15 bills, including the Bills of Lading Bill, the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, the Coastal Shipping Bill, as well as the Manipur- and Goa-related legislation also passed by the Lok Sabha. *—PTI*

## Parl clears online money games bills

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The Parliament on Thursday passed a bill to ban all forms of online money games and promote eSports and online social gaming, with the Rajya Sabha approving it without debate amid din.

Piloting The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025 in the Upper House, Minister of Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said the legislation will promote two-thirds of the online gaming segment. The bill, he said, will ban online money games, which have become a big problem for society, especially middle-class youth. The bill was approved by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 3***

# India is not biggest buyer of Russia oil: EAM hits out at US

## In Moscow, EAM says it was US that encouraged buying of oil

**NEW DELHI/MOSCOW, 21 AUG**

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, during a visit to Moscow, firmly defended India's energy ties with Russia, stating that India is neither the biggest purchaser of Russian oil nor has it seen the largest trade surge with Moscow post-2022. His remarks came amid escalating trade tensions with the US, which recently imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods over oil purchases from Russia.

At a joint media briefing with Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, Jaishankar called the US position "perplexing", highlighting that Washington had previously encouraged global energy stability, even if it meant buying Russian oil. He noted that China is the largest buyer of Russian crude, while the EU remains the biggest LNG importer.

Jaishankar also met President Vladimir Putin and First Deputy PM Denis Manturov, focusing on strengthening bilateral ties and preparing for Putin's planned visit to India later this year. India turned to discounted Russian oil following Western sanctions after Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Russia's share in India's total oil imports surged from 1.7 per cent in 2019-20 to 35.1 per cent in 2024-25. However, Jaishankar stressed India's energy decisions are based on national interest and market dynamics.

In Moscow, Jaishankar and Lavrov reaffirmed the aim to expand India-Russia trade in a balanced, sustainable way, addressing non-tariff barriers. He called for boosting Indian exports in sectors like pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and textiles, and discussed enhancing cooperation in fertilisers and skilled labour.

The ministers also agreed to intensify joint efforts against terrorism and discussed the situation in Ukraine, West Asia, and Afghanistan. Jaishankar reiterated India's support for resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy. India also raised concerns over nationals serving in the Russian army, urging swift resolution of pending cases and missing persons. *— PTI*

Russian President Vladimir Putin greets EAM S Jaishankar during their meeting in Moscow, Russia on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

## Modi gets on a call with French Prez Macron on Ukraine

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday held a phone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron focusing on resolution of the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia.

Macron was among the European leaders who accompanied Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his talks with US President Donald Trump this week.

Trump's meeting with Zelenskyy came days after he held summit talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on the Ukraine conflict. *—PTI*

## China 'welcomes' Indian goods into its market

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Chinese ambassador to India Xu Feihong today announced that China welcomes all Indian commodities to enter its market.

In his address at an event here, Xu accused the US of behaving like a "bully" and said that while the country always benefited from free trade, it is now using tariffs as "bargaining chips". He also added that "China will firmly stand with India", asserting that the two countries are double engines of economic growth in Asia.

Xu said that China fully opposed the US move of imposing tariffs of upto 50 per cent on India and Washington's threat to increase it. He added that the tariff and trade "wars" were disrupting the global economic and trade system.

Speaking about the upcoming SCO Summit in China, Xu said his country is willing to work with all parties, including India, to hold the summit, featuring friendship, solidarity, and fruitful outcomes.

"Together, we can open a new chapter of a dragon-elephant tango," he asserted. India and China on Tuesday unveiled a series of measures for a "stable, cooperative" relationship that included jointly maintaining peace along the frontier and reopening border trade. *—PTI*

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## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CLEARS GBA BILL

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

The Greater Bengaluru Governance (Amendment) Bill 2025 was passed in the Legislative Council on Thursday, paving the way for it to become an Act after Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's consent.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, tabled the Bill in the Upper House and was passed after a brief discussion. The Bill had earlier been cleared by the Legislative Assembly.

Speaking after tabling the Bill, Shivakumar said the amendment "clarifies that the Greater Bengaluru Authority will not interfere in the functioning of corporations in violation of the 74th Amendment of the Constitution." He said, "According to the 2011 census, each ward had 18,000 people, which is now 30,000. We will seek members' feedback when adding new areas to the corporation." *—PTI*

# Assam to stop giving new Aadhaar cards to adults

**GUWAHATI, 21 AUG**

People above 18 years of age will not get first-time Aadhaar cards in Assam as a precautionary measure to check illegal immigrants from getting Indian citizenship, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

Only a one-month window from 1 September will be given to them to apply for an Aadhaar card if anyone has not got the document yet, he told. First-time Aadhaar cards will no longer be issued to those above 18 from October, barring a section of people. Tea Tribes, SC and ST people above 18 will continue to receive new Aadhaar for the next one year, Sarma clarified.

According to the Unique Identification Authority of India, there is no age limit for Aadhaar enrolment. He said if a genuine Indian adult citizen is left out from the Aadhaar network, he or she can apply to the district commissioner concerned, who will verify the credentials and issue the same in the "rarest of the rare" cases.

"The Aadhaar saturation of people in Assam is 103 per cent, which signifies that no people are left and the number of cards exceeded the number of total people," Sarma said. *—PTI*

# River basins swell as rains lash Karnataka

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Incessant rains lashed Karnataka on Thursday, swelling rivers and disrupting road connectivity as bridges were submerged across several districts.

The state recorded 190 mm rainfall from 1 to 21 August—16 per cent above normal, according to the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre.

Heavy rainfall impacted Dharwad, Gadag, Davangere, Haveri, and Uttara Kannada, damaging homes and farmland.

In Yadgir, flood threats loom over villages along the Krishna river as 2.8 lakh cusecs of water were released from the Basavasagar dam. The Kollur bridge was submerged, while in Raichur, 2.5 lakh cusecs from the Narayanpur reservoir submerged the Huvinahadagali bridge, cutting off access to Yadgir and Kalaburagi. *—PTI*

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## 'Lion' Vijay marks territory in poll-bound TN

**MADURAI, 21 AUG**

Actor-turned-politician Vijay has announced he will contest from Madurai East in the 2026 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, but urged voters to consider him the face of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in all Madurai constituencies. Speaking at TVK's second state conference in Madurai, Vijay declared there would be no alliance with either the DMK or BJP, stating, "I am a lion. I'm marking my territory."

Positioning TVK as the main opposition to the DMK, he called the BJP his "ideological enemy" and the DMK his "political enemy". Ruling out ties with AIADMK, he pledged a people-centric governance model prioritising women's safety, youth, the elderly, farmers, trans and disabled individuals.

He also took strong stances on popular issues, demanding the return of Katchatheevu and the scrapping of NEET. *—PTI*

***>>>More on Page 3***

# Kolkata students beaten up, dubbed 'Bangladeshis'

**KOLKATA, 21 AUG**

A group of students from Kolkata University's Carmichael Hostel were allegedly attacked near Sealdah here on Wednesday night and branded as "Bangladeshis" by a group of shopkeepers and miscreants. This has triggered a political row with TMC linking this to a larger pattern of harassment of Bengalis outside the state.

Police said a hostel boarder went to buy mobile accessories in Sealdah and a scuffle ensued after an argument over price. Soon, more students joined in. The students alleged that the shopkeepers, who were Hindi-speaking, abused them for speaking in Bengali, accused them of being "Bangladeshis" and then attacked them with hockey sticks, knives and cricket gear. Several students were injured and admitted to the hospital. Two people were arrested - Dipak Kr Shaw, 29, a staffer at a mobile cover shop, and Imtiaz Ali, 35, another employee.

TMC leader and state party spokesperson Krishanu Mitra dubbed this an ethnic profiling case. *—PTI*

**'RIGHT TO WORK'**

# *Bike taxis are back on K'taka roads*

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Bike taxis are back on the roads in Karnataka following the High Court's "balanced and thoughtful observations", said Karnataka Bike Taxi Welfare Association (KBTWA) President Adi Narayan on Thursday.

Uber, Ola and Rapido have brought back the bike taxi feature on their platforms.

According to Narayan, it would benefit over six lakh riders who were without income because of the ban on bike taxis.

State Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy was not immediately available for comments.

Bike taxi operations had been suspended since 16 June.

On 20 August, High Court came down heavily on State government's ban on bike taxis, calling its arguments against the service "thin" and legally untenable.

It also said the State cannot deny livelihoods by citing the absence of a formal policy.

Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru, who headed the bench, noted that bike taxis are permitted in at least 13 States across the country and have emerged as a lawful and essential mode of urban transport.

He said such services are not a luxury but a necessity, especially for affordable and efficient last-mile connectivity. The court said, "A mere lack of regulation cannot be the basis for a blanket ban that deprives thousands of their right to work." Narayan said following the ban said, many riders have been compelled to shift to irregular delivery jobs with lower and inconsistent earnings, creating rising debt and emotional stress. *—PTI*

## BJP flays ₹10 cr grant to Wayanad, Cong hits back

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

A political row has erupted after the Karnataka government sanctioned ₹10 crore for Wayanad in Kerala, represented by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi. The BJP criticised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, accusing him of favouring Kerala over Karnataka. Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka mockingly called Siddaramaiah the "Chief Minister of Kerala", while BJP state president BY Vijayendra said, "This is not compassion; it is servitude," alleging misuse of Kannadigas' tax money. In response, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao defended the grant as a humanitarian act. "We contribute to the Centre but receive little in return. We should be proud to help our neighbours," he said, dismissing BJP's criticism as politically motivated.—*PTI*

## CITU demands probe into ₹5K cr labour scam

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

The Karnataka State Building and Other Construction Workers' Federation (CITU) has demanded a full probe into alleged financial irregularities, totalling Rs 5,000 crore, in the Construction Workers' Welfare Board from 2019 to 2025. A recent CAG report exposed a ₹258-crore Covid-era scam during BJP rule. CITU alleged corruption continues under Congress, accusing former minister Shivaram Hebbar and current minister Santosh Lad of overseeing fake medical check-ups, dubious purchases, and inflated tenders. Calling it a "historic betrayal of workers", CITU criticised the government for its silence and alleged the Congress is shielding Hebbar. It urged CM Siddaramaiah to launch a comprehensive probe, punish the guilty, and deliver justice to lakhs of affected construction workers and their families
—*Salar News*

## BJP launches 'Dharmasthala Chalo' rally

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

BJP State President BY Vijayendra has accused the Karnataka government of a "systematic conspiracy" in the Dharmasthala issue and announced a week-long state-wide agitation, calling it a 'dharma yuddha'. In response to alleged misinformation against the Dharmasthala temple, a faction of the BJP launched a 'Dharmasthala Chalo' rally today from Gundanjaneya Temple, Kodigehalli Gate. Led by BJP State Secretary Tammesh Gowda and Bengaluru North District President S. Harish, over 500 vehicles are taking part. Gowda stated, "This is not a political rally, but a Dharmayatra. We will reach Dharmasthala and hold a meeting there."—*Salar News*

**RAISING VOICES**

Women protest against the Waqf Bill at the 'Save Waqf, Save Constitution' conference organised by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board at Quddus Sa'ab Eidgah Maidan; Members of the Nomadic community protest their inclusion in SC category under internal reservation, at Freedom Park in Bengaluru; All India Democratic Students Organisation activists rally against the State's Plan to shut 6,200 government schools ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

# Krishna river flood: 40 families stranded on islet

## Families on river islet refuse to move protesting govt apathy

**ATHANI, 21 AUG**

Over 100 people from 40 families belonging to the Mang community remain stranded in floodwaters in Hulagabavi village, Athani taluk, refusing to evacuate unless the government offers a permanent resettlement plan.

The locality, submerged under two feet of water for the past week, houses a pregnant woman, a paralysed man, several ill individuals, women, children, and nearly 200 livestock.

Despite worsening conditions, the families have rejected relocation to temporary shelters, citing years of unfulfilled government promises.

Heavy rainfall in Maharashtra's Western Ghats has led to the release of water from the Koyna reservoir, swelling the Krishna River and flooding downstream settlements, including the Mang basti.

Tayavva Jeevappa Keranayak, one of the victims, told Salar News: "We've been trapped on a river islet. My paralysed husband and pregnant daughter are stranded. We've pleaded for a permanent solution for decades. The local MLA has ignored us, and during emergencies, we're left to fend for ourselves. If complications arise with my daughter's pregnancy, how can we reach a hospital through these waters?"

Community members say they are willing to move only if given permanent housing. "Every monsoon, officials shift us forcibly with lathis to temporary camps, promising land before the next flood.

But once the water recedes, so do their promises," Tayavva added.

People from Gokak in the taluk's rehabilitation center ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Athani Tahsildar Siddaray Bhosegi confirmed visiting the area and urging residents to relocate. "They still have access through farmlands, though it's a detour. I've directed Gram Panchayat officials to maintain close watch," he said. Authorities are aware of the presence of vulnerable individuals among the stranded.

Meanwhile, around 500 people from flood-hit areas in Gokak, Kumbar Oni, Uppar Oni, Bojagar Galli, the old cattle market and mutton market, have been shifted to a municipal school.

They too are demanding permanent housing solutions, tired of the annual cycle of displacement caused by flooding of the Ghataprabha River. —*Salar News*

## 7,775 hectares of crops destroyed by rain in Bidar

**BIDAR, 21 AUG**

Continuous rainfall over the past three days has triggered severe flooding in Bidar district, especially in Aurad and Kamalnagar taluks. According to district officials, 138 houses were damaged, and crops across 7,775 hectares, including paddy, green gram, and horticultural produce, were destroyed.

Aurad and Kamalnagar saw the highest impact, where 21 cattle perished. In Hulsur and Humnabad, 8 and 7 houses were damaged respectively. A total of 138 anganwadis were affected.

Deputy Commissioner Shilpa Sharma estimated the total loss at ₹23 crore and confirmed that Rs 5,000 immediate relief has been sanctioned per family. —*Salar News*

**ILLEGAL MINING CASES**

# Govt passes Bill to appoint recovery commissioner

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

- As per the Bill, a serving or retired officer not below the rank of Additional Chief Secretary will be appointed as the Recovery Commissioner to supervise recovery proceedings

The State Legislative Assembly on Thursday passed a Bill that aims to appoint a Recovery Commissioner for seizure and attachment of property related to illegal mining in the state.

The State Appointment of Recovery Commissioner for seizure and attachment of property of Illegal Mining and proceeds of crime Bill 2005, provides for the appointment of Recovery Commissioner for seizure, attachment and forfeiture of properties derived from illegal mining activities.

It also deals with multiple transactions involving a myriad number of lessees, transporters, exporters, stockholders, purchasers and other intermediaries, organised crime, cohesive conspiracy and proceeds of crime in the State of Karnataka.

As per the Bill, a serving or retired officer not below the rank of Additional Chief Secretary will be appointed as the Recovery Commissioner to supervise recovery proceedings.

The Bill comes after Law Minister HK Patil wrote a letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in June expressing concerns over the government's apathy towards -- taking illegal mining cases in the state to logical end, in ensuring that the culprits are punished, and the lost wealth is recovered.

The recovery commissioner, as per the Bill, shall issue directions to subordinate officers for timely enforcement of attachment or forfeiture order, receive complaints from individuals, recommend further legal or criminal action where necessary and so on. It gives the recovery commissioner powers of a civil court. It also ensures that officers cannot be prosecuted for acts done in good faith.

Additionally, the Opposition parties on Thursday pushed the Congress government to refer to Karnataka Crowd Control (Managing Crowd at Events and Place of Gathering) Bill to a house committee for detailed discussion and scrutiny, expressing concerns that the proposed legislation may curtail protests and impact cultural and religious events.

The Bill is aimed at effectively controlling the crowd and managing mass gathering at events and functions and preventing unlawful gatherings.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said that the Chinnaswamy stadium stampede was a "wake-up call".

Any event in which less than 7,000 people are expected will require permission from the jurisdictional police station, while those with above 7,000 to 50,000 will require a permission from Deputy SP or ACP. For events where more than 50,000 people will require permission from the SP or the Commissioner. —*PTI*

## Social activist arrested over alleged hate speech, defamation

**BRAHMAVAR, 21 AUG**

Social activist **Mahesh Shetty Timarodi** has been taken into custody by the Brahmavar police for questioning in a case registered in Udupi district.

A team led by ASP Sudhakar Nayak arrived in Belthangady and detained Timarodi at his residence near Ujire. The arrest is linked to a case filed at the Brahmavar Police Station, where Timarodi is accused of defaming BJP National General Secretary BL Santhosh, and allegedly sharing hate on social media.

The complaint filed by Rajeev Kulal said, Mandal President of Udupi Rural BJP, Timarodi allegedly posted a video on his Facebook that contained derogatory remarks about Santhosh and incited communal disharmony.

Based on complaint, police have booked Timarodi under various sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Police had earlier summoned Timarodi, but he failed to appear.

On Thursday morning, a large contingent of police officers arrived at his residence

to detain him. A high drama unfolded at the scene, with Timarodi and his associate Girish Mattannavar questioning the legality of the arrest, citing the absence of an arrest warrant. —*PTI*

## PATIL PLEDGES ACTION AGAINST ENCROACHMENTS

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

State Sugar and Agricultural Marketing Minister, Shivanand Patil, has pledged swift action against individuals encroaching on lakes, check dams, and grazing lands. Addressing farmers at Freedom Park in the City, he stated, "A high-level meeting chaired by the Revenue Minister will be convened shortly to address the issue and provide appropriate resolutions."

Patil met the farmers who had undertaken a padayatra (foot march) from Chikkamagaluru to the State capital, led by farmer leader Aralapura Manjegowda under the banner of State Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene. The farmers were demanding action on various agricultural issues.

Shivanand Patil ***PHOTO: PTI***

In his remarks, the minister assured that the State government has announced Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for key crops, including jowar and ragi, with jowar receiving an MSP of up to Rs 3,500.

On sugarcane prices, Patil indicated that the state will recommend the Central Government set the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) at Rs 4,400 per ton. He acknowledged that six of the 79 sugar factories in the state still owe payments to farmers, promising that the outstanding Rs 18 crore would be cleared soon.

Additionally, a delegation from Vijayapura raised land issues, to which he responded, "Their grievances would be looked into." His assurances have provided hope to farmers amid ongoing agricultural challenges. —*Salar News*

***PHOTO: PTI***

## Tungabhadra to get new gates by June 2026: DKS

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Thursday that the work for replacing all the gates of the Tungabhadra reservoir has already begun and will be completed by June 2026.

In a post on X, Dy CM said once the new gates are installed, the reservoir will be able to store water at its full capacity.

On 20 August, he had also told the Legislative Assembly that the manufacturing of crest gates for the Tungabhadra dam was going on.

"Tungabhadra Dam Board has issued the tender for making 33 crest gates to an Ahmedabad-based company. Work on six crest gates is going on right now at Gadag and Hosapete. The fabrication work is already complete. We have instructed the engineers to speed up the process. We have asked them to delegate some of the work to others for quicker completion," he informed.

He said, State can only store 80 TMC of water this year due to safety reasons.

"Crest gate installation won't be possible if we give water for the second crop. Our farmers are worried about their crops and I spoke to dam officials about it. They asked if the dam safety was more important or the second crop," he said. —*PTI*

**MASS BURIALS**

## *Cong's TN MP Senthil behind D'sthala propaganda: BJP MLA*

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

BJP MLA **G Janardhana Reddy** has launched a fresh salvo against Congress MP from Tamil Nadu's Thiruvallur, **Sasikanth Senthil**, accusing him of being the "mastermind" behind the "propaganda" being spread against the temple town of Dharmasthala in Dakshina Kannada district.

He challenged Senthil, a former IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre, to face an inquiry if he had no connection with the "mass burial" propaganda being spread.

The State government had formed a Special Investigation Team after allegations of multiple murders, rapes, and illegal burials in Dharmasthala over the past two decades emerged. The complainant, a former sanitation worker whose identity has not been disclosed, claimed that he was employed in Dharmasthala between 1995 and 2014. He alleged that he was forced to

***PHOTO: PTI***

bury several bodies-including those of women and minors, some of which bore signs of sexual assault.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said, bones and skeletons were found at two locations, and the police are waiting for the forensic report. Speaking to reporters here on Wednesday, Reddy claimed that Senthil is the "mastermind behind the propaganda to tarnish Dharmasthala Manjunatha Swamy by YouTubers, social media users, a masked man and now Sujata Bhat."

**YouTuber granted bail**

Mangaluru District Sessions Court has granted anticipatory bail to YouTuber MD Sameer, accused of spreading misinformation via an AI-generated video on Dharmasthala.

Police had filed a Suo Motu case, alleging the video incited unrest. Sameer, who ignored police summons, sought protection from arrest on August 19.

The court has now allowed his plea, shielding him from immediate custody. —*PTI/Salar News*

## Mysuru Dasara: Air show to add glamour

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has thanked Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for approving an Indian Air Force air show in Mysuru during this year's Dasara celebrations and invited him to attend the event.

Siddaramaiah, in a letter to Singh, said the air show would add grandeur to the festivities and instill pride among the large number of visitors expected in Mysuru. He added that Singh's presence would encourage the people of Karnataka and further strengthen their admiration for the Armed Forces.

In a letter shared with the media by CM's office on Thursday, Siddaramaiah welcomed the Defence Minister to Mysuru during the celebrations.

Mysuru Dasara 2025, 'Naada Habba' or the state festival of Karnataka, will be celebrated from 22 September to 2 October this year.

The festival will feature an elephant march or Gajapayana, extended palace illumination, cultural programmes and the traditional Vijayadashami procession known as Jamboo Savari. —*PTI*

***PHOTO: PTI***

BATTLE LINES DRAWN

INDIA bloc's vice-presidential candidate B Sudershan Reddy, a former Supreme Court judge, files nomination in New Delhi on Wednesday, accompanied by Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and NCP(SP) leader Sharad Pawar. With NDA fielding Maharashtra Governor and BJP leader CP Radhakrishnan, the 9 September contest shapes up as a 'South vs South' face-off, Reddy from Telangana and Radhakrishnan, hailed as a 'Pachai Tamizhan', from Tamil Nadu. Opposition calls it an ideological battle, though numbers favour NDA. ***PHOTO: PTI***

## Raj meets Fadnavis amid alliance buzz with Sena (UBT)

Fadnavis; Raj Thackeray ***PHOTO: PTI***

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

The recent meeting between Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the latter's official residence, 'Varsha', has ignited speculation within the state's political circles. This encounter follows an embarrassing defeat for the joint electoral front of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) and MNS in the BEST Employees' Co-operative Credit Society elections, where they failed to secure any of the 21 available seats.

Speaking to reporters, Thackeray highlighted the challenges of slum redevelopment leading to increased population density, resulting in significant parking issues and traffic congestion. He presented a proposal for constructing underground parking lots beneath playgrounds to accommodate between 500 to 1,000 vehicles, ensuring above-ground spaces remain unaffected. "Work has to be done on a war footing," he emphasised.

In light of recent discussions about a potential alliance between the Sena (UBT) and MNS for upcoming local body elections, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar downplayed the significance of the meeting, stating, "Many leaders meet one another... There is no need to give a political angle to this meeting." Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut added that Thackeray's meeting with Fadnavis is not unusual and may have been merely to extend an invitation for the upcoming Ganesh festival. *—PTI*

# RS adopts motion on bills for removing PM, CMs

### Motion to nominate 10 members to a joint panel to review bills

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday adopted a motion to nominate 10 members to the Joint Committee of both Houses, which will scrutinise the three bills for the removal of prime minister, chief ministers, and ministers on arrest for 30 consecutive days on serious charges, amid vociferous protests by the Opposition.

The Upper House adopted a motion to concur with the recommendation of the Lok Sabha in joining the 31-member Joint Committee to look into these bills; 21 members will be from the Lok Sabha.

The motion to send members to the Joint Committee was adopted by the Upper House with voice vote, amid stiff opposition and protests by the Opposition, which also tore copies of the draft legislation and strongly protested in the Well of the House.

As Deputy Chairman Harivansh called Home Minister Amit Shah for moving the motion to concur the recommendation of the Lok Sabha to refer the bills to Joint Committee and nominate the members, Opposition benches were on their feet and were shouting slogans.

**Vote chor, gaddi chhod: Oppn shouts at PM**

Opposition members on Thursday shouted slogans of "Vote chor, Gaddi chhod" as Prime Minister Narendra Modi entered the Lok Sabha.

The Speaker had to adjourn the House due to the chaos and confusion. The Opposition demanded a deliberation on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar. The phrase 'Vote chor, gaddi chor' mean the thief who stole votes should leave the chair.

On 7 August, Congress MP and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi held a press conference where he accused the Election Commission of large-scale electoral fraud to benefit the BJP in the assembly elections in the state of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Haryana. *—PTI*

TMC MPs Mahua Moitra, Sagarika Ghose and Satabdi Roy with others raise slogans as they stage a protest during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

- The Speaker had to adjourn the House due to the chaos and confusion. The Opposition demanded a deliberation on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar

## Parl passes bill to ban all online money games

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Parliament has passed the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025, aimed at banning all forms of online money games while promoting eSports and online social gaming. The Rajya Sabha approved the bill without debate, following its earlier passage in the Lok Sabha.

Minister of Electronics and IT, Ashwini Vaishnaw, stated that the legislation addresses a critical issue, highlighting the societal repercussions, particularly for middle-class youth. "There is addiction. The family's savings are lost. It is estimated that 45 crore people have fallen victim to it," he said, noting that over Rs 20,000 crore from families' hard-earned money has been lost. He also cited the World Health Organization's classification of gaming disorders and indicated that online money gaming poses a public health risk.

The bill prohibits advertisements for online money games and prevents banks from facilitating transactions related to them. Offenders face imprisonment of up to three years or fines up to Rs 1 crore. Vaishnaw dismissed Opposition concerns, stating, "Their non-participation reflects a lack of interest in the welfare of youth and middle-class families." *—PTI*

NO ALLIANCE WITH DMK, BJP

## Actor Vijay to contest Assembly polls from Madurai East

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Actor Vijay Actor-politician Vijay on Friday announced that he would contest the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls in 2026 from the Madurai East constituency.

However, he ruled out the possibility of his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam's (TVK) forming an alliance with the BJP and DMK in the forthcoming.

Speaking at the second congerence of TVK in Madurai, Vijay, said that while the ruling DMK is his party's political enemy and the BJP is "policy enemy."

"A lion is always a lion. There will be so many jackals and other animals in a jungle, but there will be only one lion. He will remain the king of the jungle even if he is alone," Vijay, also known as Thalapathy, said.

Refuting rumours of TVK's alliance with the saffron party, he said. "We are not against any religion. Our party represents the people of Tamil Nadu, who will reject the BJP," he added.

Vijay appealed to his supporters to vote for the party in the upcoming polls, saying not all actors are fools and not all politicians intelligent.

"You have been by my side for the last 30 years and treated me as your family. I worship and respect people. My aim is to serve the people," he said.

The TVK chief also raised the issue of NEET and the arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lanka. *—Agencies*

A massive crowd gathers to support Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam President Vijay in Madurai, on Thursday ***PHOTO: PTI***

## Many cancer drug beyond price regulation ambit

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

A Rajya Sabha Parliamentary panel has urged the government to bring more cancer drugs under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013, citing that many remain outside price regulation, making treatment unaffordable for patients. While the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) 2022 increased anti-cancer drugs under price control from 40 to 63, a substantial number remain excluded. The panel recommended regular market assessments, quality monitoring of generic medicines, and streamlined regulatory pathways for access to new therapies. It called for greater domestic research investment and public-private collaboration. *—PTI*

## Senior CPI MLA Vazhoor Soman dies at 72

**T'PURAM, 21 AUG**

Senior Communist Party of India (CPI) leader and MLA Vazhoor Soman has died at the age of 72 following a cardiac arrest. Soman represented Peerumade in Idukki district in the state Assembly. Kerala Revenue Minister K Rajan reported that Soman collapsed while descending the steps of a building in PTP Nagar, shortly after attending a revenue assembly meeting concerning Idukki district in the afternoon. "He was rushed to the hospital immediately but could not be saved," the minister stated. Party sources confirmed that his body will be brought to the CPI state headquarters to allow party workers and the public to pay their final respects before being taken to his constituency for burial. The leader's passing marked a significant loss for the CPI party and the people of Idukki. *—PTI*

## China surprised over EAM's Taiwan remarks clarification

**BEIJING, 21 AUG**

China on Thursday expressed "surprise" over clarification by India over External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's reported comments related to the One-China policy during his talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi this week.

India on Tuesday said there is no change in its position on Taiwan, and New Delhi's relationship with it focuses on economic, technology and cultural ties.

"We are surprised at India's clarification," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a media briefing. She was replying to a question from China's official media on reports of India's clarification over Jaishankar's remarks.

India said there is no change in its position with Taiwan and New Delhi's relation with it ***PHOTO: PTI***

The clarification came after the Chinese foreign ministry reportedly misquoted Jaishankar as saying during his talks with Wang that Taiwan is part of China.

The Chinese spokesperson on Thursday claimed that Beijing finds it "inconsistent with the facts".

"Let me stress that there is but one China in the world, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. This is a prevailing consensus among the international community, including India," Mao claimed.

China hopes India will earnestly abide by the one-China principle, properly handle sensitive issues and promote the steady development of bilateral relations, she said.

Though India and Taiwan do not have formal diplomatic ties, their bilateral trade relations have been on an upswing. *—PTI*

## Kerala Cong MLA resigns amid misconduct allegations by actress

**PATHANAMTHITTA, 21 AUG**

Kerala Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, who faces an internal party inquiry over a misbehaviour allegation by an actress, on Thursday announced his resignation as state Youth Congress president.

He announced this while speaking to reporters at his residence in Adoor near here.

After actress Rini Ann George accused "a young leader" of a well-known political party of misbehaviour, BJP and CPI(M) affiliated youth organisation DYFI were protesting against Mamkootathil and demanding his resignation as MLA.

Cong MLA Rahuk Mamkootathil faces an internal inquiry by the party ***PHOTO: ANI***

His decision to resign from the party post came soon after Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in the State Assembly VD Satheesan asserted that nobody found guilty will be spared.

The MLA began the press conference by saying that he had spoken to the Opposition leader, as well as KPCC and AICC leaders, on Thursday morning.

"They did not demand my resignation. The actress is my friend, and I don't believe the person she mentioned was me. She is my good friend and will remain so. I believe that I have not done anything against the law or the Constitution of the country until now," he said.

"At a time when the state government is facing severe protests and allegations, Congress leaders and party workers should not spend their time and energy on such matters. Hence, I have decided to resign," he said in a statement. *—PTI*

## Guwahati scribe booked over controversial video

**GUWAHATI, 21 AUG**

The Guwahati Crime Branch has filed a First Information Report (FIR) against journalist and YouTuber Abhisar Sharma, following a complaint from local resident Alok Baruah. The complaint alleges that Sharma's YouTube video mocks both the Assam and Union governments, and accuses Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of "pursuing communal politics." The FIR invokes Sections 152 (sedition), 196, and 197 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. Baruah claims that Sharma's remarks, made with malicious intent, could provoke communal sentiments and create distrust against lawful authorities. He expressed concern that the video is spurring a religion-based divide in the community, potentially disturbing public peace and harmony. The FIR states that such comments threaten India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity. *—PTI*

Oppn questioned Nitish Kumar's secular credentials ***PHOTO: PTI***

## Nitish Kumar declines to wear 'topi' at madrasa event

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday refused to wear a headgear offered to him during an event of the state madrasa board, stirring a political row ahead of the Bihar assembly polls later this year.

The opposition questioned his "secular credentials".

Nitish had earlier worn a skull cap at Iftar parties and Islamic events in the past. However, after joining the NDA he did not wear the headgear in the Iftar party hosted by him. His frequent changing sides earned him the sobriquet of "Paltu chacha".

A viral video showed a member of the board attempting to put the Muslim cap on the Chief Minister's head. However, he declined and handed it to him.

Bihar's Minority Minister Zama Khan is seen again persuading Nitish to put the cap, to which the latter declines and places the headgear on Khan's head instead.

Muslims comprise about 18% of the state's population and hold sway over several seats.

The JD(U)'s alienated a section of the Muslim community especially after the party extended its support to the Waqf law. *—Agencies*

'Z' SECURITY FOR DELHI CM

## *Delhi Police Commissioner shunted out after CM's attack*

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

Satish Golcha has replaced Delhi Police Commissioner SBK Singh as the new commissioner, a day after Delhi Chief Minister was attacked.

Singh, the director general of Home Guards, was given additional charge as the Delhi Commissioner and had taken over charge on 1 August. He is a 1988 batch IPS officer from the AGMUT (Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, and Union Territories) cadre.

Golcha, a 1992 batch IPS officer, also from the AGMUT cadre, served in various capacities in the Delhi Police. He was the deputy commissioner of police, joint commissioner of police and special commissioner of police (law and order and intelligence)

He was the special commissioner of police during the North East Delhi riots in 2020 and was appointed director general (Prisons) in April last year.

Satish Golcha is the new top cop ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Golcha, a 1992 batch IPS officer, served in various capacities in the Delhi Police. He was the deputy commissioner of police, joint commissioner of police and special commissioner

The Delhi Chief Minister was slapped and her hair pulled during a 'Jan Sunwai' at her residence on 20 August. The accused, Rajesh Sakariya, had also conducted a recce of her Shalimar Bagh residence before the attack.

Sakariya was charged under various offences, including attempt to murder.

Gupta sustained injuries to her hand, shoulder and head, met BJP MPs at her residence in Civil Lines on Sunday.

She said on X that such incidents could not break her resolve to serve the public.

The Union government has accorded 'Z' category VIP security cover to Gupta

Gupta, her official residence and the Camp Office on Raj Niwas Marg in the Civil Lines in Delhi will be secured by the VIP Security Group. *—PTI*

## FIR against driver of RaGa's vehicle for hitting cop

**NAWADA/SHEIKHPURA/ NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

An FIR has been registered against the driver of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's vehicle, which had hit a police constable in Bihar's Nawada district during the 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' two days ago, police said on Thursday.

The police constable fell in front of Gandhi's vehicle on Tuesday while the Congress MP was passing through Bhagat Singh Chowk during the ongoing yatra.

Nawada SP Abhinav Dhiman had earlier said the constable tripped in front of a vehicle in the convoy, which "barely brushed against his feet", and sustained injuries.

Meanwhile, the Yatra resumed on Thursday after a day-long break, with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav accusing Nitish Kumar government of "lacking vision" and "merely copying his ideas" for development.Yadav also said Gandhi will be back from Delhi to join the yatra. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

## Man starves wife to make her look like Nora Fatehi

**GHAZIABAD, 21 AUG**

A woman in Ghaziabad has lodged a police complaint accusing her husband and in-laws of severe harassment and mental torture for dowry demands. Married for just six months, she claims her family spent over Rs 76 lakh on the wedding, yet faced constant "body-shaming." Her husband, a government school PE teacher, allegedly called her "fat and ugly," and demanded that she maintained a body like actor Nora Fatehi through three hours of daily workouts. She was denied food if she didn't comply. An FIR was registered. *—PTI*

## Family of 5 found dead in T'gana, suicide suspected

**HYDERABAD, 21 AUG**

Five members of a family from Karnataka's Kalaburagi district were found dead at their rented home in Hyderabad's Maqtha area on Thursday. Police suspect they died by suicide after consuming a poisonous substance. The deceased include a 60 year old man, his 55 year old wife, their daughter, son in law and a two year old granddaughter. Preliminary investigations indicate the man had taken loans and was under severe financial stress. Neighbours alerted Miyapur police after noticing unusual silence in the house. Officers discovered the bodies and shifted them to a hospital for autopsy. The family had moved to Hyderabad in 2019. Further investigations are being conducted by the police in the incident. *—PTI*

## Haryana teacher cremated; Internet services barred

**CHANDIGARH, 21 AUG**

The last rites of 19-year-old teacher Manisha, whose mysterious death will now be investigated by the CBI, were performed in Bhiwani on Thursday. Her body was discovered in a field on 13 August, two days after she went missing while heading to enquire about admission at a nursing college.To prevent any untoward incident, the Haryana government on Thursday extended the suspension of mobile internet, bulk SMS and dongle services in Bhiwani district for another 24 hours from 11am. Manisha's death triggered massive protests, with residents demanding a CBI probe and a third autopsy at AIIMS Delhi. Police earlier suggested suicide, but her family rejected the claim, demanding justice for her. *—PTI*

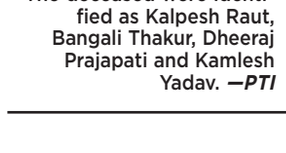



PHOTO: ANI

## 4 dead after gas leak at M'rashtra pharma company

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

Four workers were killed and two others hospitalised after inhalation of nitrogen gas that leaked at a pharmaceutical company in Tarapur MIDC of Maharashtra's Palghar district on Thursday. The incident occurred in the afternoon at Medley Pharma located in the industrial area of Boisar. Chief of Palghar district disaster management cell, Vivekanand Kadam, said thatgas leaked from the nitrogen reaction tank affected six persons working there. They were rushed to a hospital, where four of them died. Two others are currently undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) at the hospital. The deceased were identified as Kalpesh Raut, Bangali Thakur, Dheeraj Prajapati and Kamlesh Yadav. *—PTI*

# Protests rock Gujarat over boy's murder, 500 booked

## Class 8 student confessed to the crime on Instagram chat

**BENGALURU, 21 AUG**

The protests against the murder of a class 10 student by a class 8 student at the Seventh Day Adventist School in Gujarat's Ahmedabad continued on Friday, with the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) alleging negligence by school authorities and demanding closure the institute's closure.

A mob had ransacked the premises of the private school and assaulted its staff over the murder of a Nayan Santani on 20 August.

The students and their parents also held a protest as they held placards and alleged regular instances of thefts, arguments and brawls on the premises. They claimed that despite repeated complaints, the school authorities did not initiate any action.

The class 8 student had stabbed Santani with a sharp knife just outside the school building over a minor scuffle on 19 August.. The accused tried to flee from the spot, but was spotted by a security guard. The NSUI staged demonstrations, demanding that the school be shut down. Several members were detained as they tried to storm inside the school premises and clashed with police personnel deployed there.

Around 200 schools in Maninagar, Khokhara and Isanpur remained shut as part of a bandh called by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad over the incident.

Meanwhile, the victim's family alleged that instead of calling an ambulance the school authorities arranged for a water tanker to wash away the blood's stains to destroy evidence.

An FIR was registered and the accused was being interrogated by the police. He had reportedly confessed to the crime before a friend in his chats on Instagram. The chats revealed his friend asking him to go underground to avoid arrest.

The school administration filed a complaint and 500 people were booked for vandalism. *—PTI*

National Students' Union of India supporters hold a protest outside Seventh Day Adventist Higher Secondary School in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, on Thursday; The Instagram chat of the accused student **PHOTO: PTI**

**'THERE IS POLITICAL SOLUTION'**

# If Guvs sit on bills, courts can't fix timeline, says SC

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

- The court earlier said judicial activism should not become judicial terrorism when Mehta said that elected people having a vast experience should never be undermined. Constutution did not fix timeline for governors to act on bill.

The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre if hands of constitutional courts could be tied if constitutional functionaries refused to discharge functions or there was inaction on the part of Governor on bills passed by state assemblies.

The court made the remarks after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said if some Governors sat over bills passed by the assembly, political solutions had to be explored by states instead of judicial solutions.

The court heard a presidential reference on the question whether the court can impose timelines for governors and President to deal with bills passed by state assemblies. If there was any wrong, the court said, there ought to be a remedy.

Mehta underscored invoking statesmanship and political maturity to end the impasse between the state government and Governor.

Mehta said the Constitution did not fix a timeline was fixed for Governor or President to act on the bills.

The court earlier said judicial activism should not become judicial terrorism when Mehta said that elected people should never be undermined. President Droupadi Murmu earlier sought to know whether judicial orders could impose timelines for the exercise of discretion by the president while dealing with bills.

The apex court had prescribed President to decide on the bills reserved for her consideration within three months from the date of reference. *—PTI*

# Woman on FBI's 'Most Wanted' list held in India

**NEW YORK, 21 AUG**

- Singh, 40, fled the United States in 2023 to avoid prosecution. The FBI had issued a reward of up to £250,000 for information leading to her arrest.

Cindy Rodriguez Singh, a woman on the FBI's '10 Most Wanted Fugitive' list, was apprehended in India on charges related to the murder of her six-year-old son, officials have confirmed.

The capture marks the fourth "Top 10 Most Wanted" arrest in the past seven months, as noted by FBI Director Kash Patel in an X post on Wednesday. He attributed the success to the collaboration between law enforcement in Texas, the US Justice Department, and Indian authorities.

Singh, 40, fled the United States in 2023 to avoid prosecution. The FBI had issued a reward of up to £250,000 for information leading to her arrest. Reports suggest she was arrested by the FBI in conjunction with INTERPOL and local Indian authorities before being transported back to the US to face charges.

Cindy Rodriguez Singh **PHOTO: ANI**

In March 2023, Texas authorities conducted a welfare check on Singh's special needs son, Noel Rodriguez-Alvarez, who had not been seen since October 2022. Singh allegedly misled officials about the child's whereabouts before boarding an international flight with her husband and several children.

Singh is set to face charges of 'Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution' and 'Capital Murder of a person under 10 years of age'. *—PTI*

# Ramalingam murder: NIA raids 9 spots in TN, arrests another

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

- Imthathullah was detained for allegedly harbouring absconding offenders since 2021. Ramalingam, a local political worker, was killed in 2019 by PFI members.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) executed searches at nine locations in Tamil Nadu, arresting another suspect linked to the 2019 Ramalingam murder.

Imthathullah, the proprietor of Ambur Biryani Hotels, was detained for allegedly harbouring absconding offenders since 2021. Ramalingam, a local political worker, was murdered on 5 February, 2019, allegedly by members of the Popular Front of India (PFI).

The NIA has been investigating the case since March 2019 after taking over from Tamil Nadu police. The agency had previously charged 18 suspects, six of whom are absconders. In 2021, one absconder was arrested, and more recently, two were found and apprehended in November 2024.

NIA announced rewards for information on remaining suspects, including Mohammed Ali Jinna, who remains at large. Authorities are seeking further leads to resolve this high-profile case effectively. *—PTI*

# Explosives found outside Kerala school

**PALAKKAD, 21 AUG**

Dangerous explosives were discovered outside Vyasa Vidhya Peedom pre-primary school in Vadakanthara on Wednesday, following an incident involving a young student.

Ten-year-old Narayanan unearthed the explosives, believed to be used for wild boar elimination. In an act of curiosity, he threw one device, resulting in an explosion that injured both him and an elderly woman, Leela, 84.

Authorities responded quickly, locating four additional explosives secured in a bucket. Both injured individuals have since been hospitalised and are stable. Police have registered a case under the Explosive Substance Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, citing endangerment to life.

A thorough investigation was launched, with CCTV footage being reviewed to identify the guilty. *—PTI*

## Six Delhi schools receive bomb threats again

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Six schools in the national capital received bomb threats on Thursday through e-mail, prompting police and other emergency agencies to launch a search operation.

Calls regarding the bomb threat were received between 6.35am and 7.48am in the Andhra school in Prasad Nagar, BGS International School, Rao Man Singh School, Convent School, Max Fort School and Indraprastha International School in Dwarka.

Police teams, along with fire personnel and bomb disposal squads, rushed to the premises.This is the third such incident in four days. *—PTI*

# UP man out on bail kills sister-in-law, her daughters

**BAHRAICH, 21 AUG**

A man out on bail for his brother's 2018 murder has been arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich for allegedly killing his widowed sister in law and her three daughters.

Police said Anirudh Kumar, jailed earlier over a property dispute, coerced his late brother Santosh's wife, Suman, 36, into a relationship after securing bail, fathering two daughters with her.

Suman, a key witness in Santosh's murder case, refused to alter her testimony, angering Anirudh. On 14 August, he allegedly lured Suman, her 12 year old daughter Nandini, six-year-old Anshika, and three-year-old Laado to a bridge in Lakhimpur Kheri district and pushed them into the Sharda River with an associate's help.

Anirudh confessed to the crime after his arrest. Police recovered clothes, shoes, and the motorcycle used, but is yet to locate the bodies. The associate remains absconding, and a search is underway to nab him. *—PTI*

## CBI arrests 8 J&K policemen for custodial torture

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The CBI will seek police remand of eight Jammu and Kashmir Police personnel arrested for the "brutal and inhuman custodial torture" of Constable Khursheed Ahmad Chohan in 2023.

Among those held are DSP Aijaz Ahmad Naiko, SI Riyaz Ahmad, and six others accused of torturing Chohan for six days at the Joint Interrogation Centre, Kupwara, after summoning him over a narcotics case.

According to the FIR, Chohan was beaten with iron rods, given electric shocks, and subjected to genital mutilation. His wife's complaint led the Supreme Court to transfer the case to the CBI, rejecting police claims of a suicide attempt.

Terming it one of the "most barbaric police atrocities", the court ordered Rs 50 lakh compensation for Chohan and directed a CBI probe. *—PTI*

# Dalai Lama: India says won't take a stand

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday said it has seen a statement issued by the 14th Dalai Lama in July about the institution of the Dalai Lama, and underlined that it "does not take any position" on matters concerning beliefs and practices of faith and religion.

Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said this in a written response to queries in the Rajya Sabha.

The MEA was asked whether it is a fact that the government has "openly backed Dalai Lama's right to decide on his own succession". "Government has seen a statement regarding the institution of Dalai Lama issued by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama on 02 July 2025. Government of India does not take any position on matters concerning beliefs and practices of faith and religion," MoS said. "Government has always upheld freedom of religion for all in India and will continue to do so. This has been conveyed to China." *—PTI*

**'FROM OUR SOIL'**

# *'Indian will visit space in India's rocket'*

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Excited after a successful mission to the International Space Station (ISS), Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla on Thursday hoped someone would very soon travel to space "from our own capsule, from our rocket, from our soil".

Group Captain Shukla said the first-hand experience from the ISS mission was invaluable and a lot better than any training.

He also said India looks "saare jahaan se achcha (better than the entire world)" even today .

On his Axiom-4 Mission, Shukla said the experience from the ISS mission would be very useful for India's own Gaganyaan mission.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh, who was present said the Department of Space has been around for nearly 70 years, and officially, the ISRO was established in 1969.

Astronaut and Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla addresses a joint press briefing about Axiom-4 mission, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Group Captain Prasanth B Nair, who is part of India's Gaganyaan crew, said, "…. Over here right now, if I can call myself Lakshman... even though I am older than 'Shuks' (Shukla), I would love to be Lakshman to this Ram any day."

"But let's remember Ram and Lakshman got a lot of help from the entire 'vanar sena', that is our fantastic ISRO team... otherwise it would not have been possible," he said.

Shukla thanked the government, ISRO and everyone else who worked hard to successfully execute the mission.

He said, "We flew on top of the Falcon 9 vehicle in the Crew Dragon to the International Space Station for a period of two weeks and then returned.Shukla is the first Indian astronaut to travel to the ISS. *—PTI*

# 'Injecting crushed painkillers direct path to death'

**CHANDIGARH, 21 AUG**

With an intensified crackdown on narcotics sharply cutting supply lines in Haryana, the squeeze is pushing addicts toward dangerous substitutes -- injecting crushed painkillers and prescription tablets.

O Singh, head of the Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau (HSNCB), on Thursday said addicts are reportedly crushing and injecting tablets such as Tramadol, Tapentadol, and Pregabalin and warned that it was a "direct path to death."

Medical experts say this misuse can trigger blood clotting, cardiac arrest, and sudden death within minutes.

Seizures increased with 267 commercial quantity cases being booked against 238 in 2024.

Arrests jumped from 2,684 to 3,629, and inter-state arrests rose to 293 from 175.

Awareness programmes like the 'Sports for Youth' covered 4,270 villages and engaged 2.8 lakh young people.

People can report any drug-related activities on the round-the-clock national helpline number – 1993. *—PTI*

## AHIMSA FOR ALL

Kindness Is Our Strength -Let Street Dogs Live
Vaccinate, Sterilize, Return Not Remove
Ahimsa for All -Big or Small
ABC Is the Law, Compassion Is the Way
Street Dogs Belong in Their Homes - Our Streets
Kindness Is Our Strength -Let Street Dogs Live
Vaccinate, Sterilize, Return Not Remove
Kindness Is Our Strength -Let Street Dogs Live
Vaccinate, Sterilize, Return Not Remove
Vaccinate, Sterilize, Return Not Remove
ABC Is the Law, Compassion Is the Way
Kindness Is Our Strength -Let Street Dogs Live
Vaccinate, Sterilize, Return Not Remove
Kindness Is Our Strength -Let Street Dogs Live

Animal lovers hold a protest against the recent order by the Supreme Court directing authorities in Delhi-NCR to start relocating all stray dogs from streets to shelters, at Jantar Mantar, in New Delhi . The Supreme Court on Thursday refused urgent listing of a plea challenging a notification issued by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi with regard to picking up of stray dogs. The application submitted that MCD issued the notification despite orders having been reserved by the apex court. The whole problem of stray dogs in Delhi-NCR is because of "inaction" of local authorities, the top court had said on 14 August
***PHOTO: PTI***

# 'Govts now equate critique with sabotage'

Compared to convicted terrorist Aftab Ansari by the West Bengal government in an open court, Jadavpur University alumnus and researcher Hindol Majumdar, who has been accused of masterminding an attack on a state minister's convoy, said he expected no better analogy from an establishment which is "intolerant" to any form of criticism.

Speaking to PTI a day after he was granted bail by the Alipore court and allowed to return to Spain after two weeks to continue his research in biomedicine, Majumdar said blunt comparisons like the one made against him have replaced nuanced arguments in public domains where tendencies are increasing to brand adversaries as 'anti-national' entities.

Majumdar, accused of plotting an attack on West Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu's convoy on the varsity campus in March, was granted bail on Monday, five days after his arrest at Delhi airport following his return from Europe.

"When I learnt that the government lawyer compared me to a convicted terrorist, I was startled at first. I simply couldn't believe it," Majumdar said.

"Later, I pondered over it and realised that I expect no better from the establishment. That's because the dominating sentiment in society these days is that if someone is critiquing you, it is held that the person is out there to get you. But it is not so," the researcher said.

Majumdar received the prestigious Marie Curie scholarship to pursue higher studies at a Spanish university.

Ansari, with whom the JU alumnus was compared in court by the chief public prosecutor of Kolkata Police on grounds of "circumstantial similarity" in plotting a crime, is the convicted mastermind of the 2002 American Center attack in Kolkata and was awarded a death sentence.

Jadavpur University alumnus and researcher Hindol Majumdar, who has been accused of masterminding an attack on a minister's convoy, said the establishment is 'intolerant' to any form of criticism ***PHOTO: FILE***

Majumdar reasoned that his critiques of the government were aimed at pushing the administration to perform better.

"All I try to say is that the government has all the resources at its disposal; it is at the top of the food chain. It can do much better in terms of improving the lives of people than it is currently doing. But it failed to accept dissent," he said.

The 31-year-old former JU student of Pharmaceutical Engineering stated that his research focused on early detection mechanisms of autoimmune disorders affecting human kidney and how to use AI and machine learning tools to predict prognosis of kidney diseases.

"Only when you love your country deeply, you want it to change for the better," said Majumdar.

He also added, "Unfortunately, there has been a paradigm shift in the way, even India's popular culture, films like 'Rang De Basanti' and 'Swades' and 'Chak De India', pointed at the prevailing ills in the system while simultaneously taking pride in nationhood. This has now reduced to only singing praises for the powers that be."

Majumdar said he still found it difficult to accept that the police would have a Lookout Circular Notice, based on which he was apprehended at the immigration desk at Delhi airport, issued against him, like they do for absconding criminals.

"Why did they have to issue a lookout notice against me? Was I absconding? They could have simply sent me an email and asked the questions. Or, they could have called me and asked me to appear for questioning," the researcher said.

The academic, however, said he had no qualms against the police, in Delhi and Kolkata, since almost all of the men in uniform he came across displayed a high degree of professionalism.

Majumdar, though, revealed that his experience in custody allowed him to explore first hand "another India" which he thought he would never have the opportunity to know except from books.

"At the lock-up in Delhi, I met a man arrested for conducting Dunki trips (using illegal immigration routes for border crossover) to Pakistan. Also met migrant workers deported from Qatar and the UAE. In Kolkata, I was put up with men accused of conducting both serious and petty crimes. Almost all came from impoverished backgrounds. The world I saw was a world where crime has been normalised. The experience was priceless," he shared.

Majumdar expressed his apprehension about maintaining the timeline of his doctoral thesis, which he intends to wrap up by 2027.

"Although I have the leave of the court to return to Spain, I am not sure when I will get back my phone and work laptop which the police have seized. My laptop contains important documents related to my work," he said.

And what about his lookout notice? Has that now been removed? "I am not sure about the status of that as well," Majumdar regretted. *–PTI*

SALAR ساہر

# Ukrainian drone startup to build cruise missiles

When a Ukrainian-made drone attacked an ammunition depot in Russia last September, it showcased Kyiv's determination to strike deep behind enemy lines and the prowess of its defence industry.

The moment was especially gratifying for the woman in charge of manufacturing the drones that flew more than 1,000 kilometres. For months after, Russia no longer had the means to keep up devastating glide bomb attacks like the one that had just targeted her native city of Kharkiv.

"Fighting in the air is our only real asymmetric advantage on the battlefield at the moment. We don't have as much manpower or money as they have," said Iryna Terekh, head of production at Fire Point.

Terekh spoke as she surveyed dozens of "deep-strike drones" that had recently come off the assembly line. These drones would be used to attack arms depots, oil refineries and other targets vital to the Kremlin's war machine and economy.

Spurred by its existential fight against Russia — and limited military assistance from Western allies — Ukraine has fast become a global centre for defence innovation. The goal is to match, if not outmuscle, Russia's capabilities — and Fire Point is one of the companies leading the way.

The Associated Press was granted an exclusive look inside one of Fire Point's dozens of covert factories. In a sprawling warehouse where rock music blared, executives showed off their signature FP-1 exploding drones that can travel up to 1,600 kilometres. They also touted publicly for the first time a cruise missile they are developing that is capable of travelling 3,000 kilometres (1,864 miles), and which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hopes will be mass-produced by the end of the year.

Even as US President Donald Trump presses for an end to the 3 1/2-year war — and dangles the prospect of US support for NATO-like security guarantees — Ukrainian defence officials say their country is determined to become more self-sufficient in deterring Russia.

"We believe our best guarantee is not relying on somebody's will to protect us, but rather our ability to protect ourselves," said Arsen Zhumadilov, the head of the country's arms procurement agency.

Ukraine's government is now purchasing about USD 10 billion of weapons annually from domestic manufacturers. The industry has the capacity to sell triple that amount, officials say, and they believe sales to European allies could help it reach such potential in a matter of years.

### Drone innovation grew out of necessity.

Like most defence companies in Ukraine, Fire Point grew out of necessity after Russia's invasion in 2022. Western countries were unwilling to allow Kyiv to use their allies' longer-range weapons.

That's when a group of close friends, experts from various fields, set out to mass-produce inexpensive drones that could match the potency of Iranian-made Shahed drones that Russia was firing into Ukraine with devastating consequences.

The company's founders spoke with AP on the condition of anonymity out of concern for their safety and the security of their factories.

By pooling together knowledge from construction, game design and architecture, the company's founders — who had no background in defence — came up with novel designs for drones. Their long-range drones had another benefit: they did not need to take off from an airfield.

When Terekh — an architect — was hired in the summer of 2023, she was given a goal of producing 30 drones per month. Now the company makes roughly 100 per day, at a cost of USD 55,000 apiece.

The FP-1 looks more like a hastily made science project. "We removed unneeded, flashy glittery stuff," she said.

But the FP-1 has been extremely effective on the battlefield.

With a payload of explosives weighing 60kg, it is responsible for 60 per cent of strikes deep inside Russian territory, including hits on oil refineries and weapons depots, according to Terekh. These strikes have helped to slow Russia's advance along the 1,000-kilometre-long front line in eastern Ukraine, where army units have reported a sharp decline in artillery fire.

### Ukraine is becoming the Silicon Valley of defence

Fire Point's story is not entirely unique. Soon after Russia's 2022 invasion, hundreds of defence companies sprouted almost overnight. The Ukrainian government incentivised innovation by relaxing regulations and making it easier for start-ups to work directly with military brigades.Fire Point team receives regular feedback from army units, and the company has reinvested most profits toward innovating quickly to keep pace with other drone makers.

Even as Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials pursue ways to end the war, Terekh said she is sceptical that Russia will accept terms for a real peace. "We are preparing for a bigger, much scarier war." *–PTI*

Fire Point touted publicly for the first time a cruise missile they are developing that is capable of travelling 3,000 kilometres (1,864 miles), they hope to mass-produce it by the end of the year ***PHOTO: PTI***

## LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# *Antarctica is undergoing abrupt changes and we are all feeling it*

Antarctica has long been seen as a remote, unchanging environment. Not any more.

The ice-covered continent and the surrounding Southern Ocean are undergoing abrupt and alarming changes. Sea ice is shrinking rapidly, the floating glaciers known as ice shelves are melting faster, the ice sheets carpeting the continent are approaching tipping points, and vital ocean currents show signs of slowing down.

Published today in Nature, our new research shows these abrupt changes are already underway – and likely to significantly intensify in the future.

Several authors of this article have witnessed these startling changes during fieldwork on the ice.

These changes spell bad news for wildlife, both iconic and lesser-known. But the changes will reach much further. What's happening in Antarctica right now will affect the world for generations to come, from rising sea levels to extreme changes in the climate system.

### What is an abrupt change?

Scientists define an abrupt change as a climatic or environmental shift taking place much faster than expected.

What makes abrupt changes so concerning is that they can amplify themselves. For example, melting sea ice allows oceans to warm more rapidly, which melts more sea ice. Once triggered, they can be difficult or even impossible to reverse on timescales meaningful to humans.

While it's common to assume incremental warming will translate to gradual change, we're seeing something different in Antarctica. Over the past decades, the Antarctic environment has had a much more muted response overall to human-caused climate warming compared to the Arctic. But about a decade ago, abrupt changes began to occur.

### Shrinking sea ice brings cascading change

Antarctica's natural systems are tightly interwoven. When one system is thrown out of balance, it can trigger cascading effects in others.

Sea ice around Antarctica has been declining dramatically since 2014. The expanse of sea ice is now shrinking at double the rate of Arctic sea ice. We found these unfolding changes are unprecedented – far outside the natural variability of past centuries.

The implications are far-reaching. Sea ice has a reflective, high-albedo surface which reflects heat back to space. When there's less sea ice, more heat is absorbed by darker oceans. Emperor penguins and other species reliant on sea ice for habitat and breeding face real threats. Less sea ice also means Antarctica's ice shelves are more exposed to waves.

What makes abrupt changes so concerning is that they can amplify themselves. For example, melting sea ice allows oceans to warm more rapidly, which melts more sea ice ***PHOTO: X/ANTARCTICASOUTH***

### Vital ocean currents are slowing

The melting of ice is slowing down the deep ocean circulation around Antarctica. This system of deep currents, known as the Antarctic Overturning Circulation, plays a critical role in regulating Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide and distributing heat.

In the northern hemisphere, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation is facing a slowdown.

We are now observing a similar risk in Southern Ocean currents. Changes to the Antarctic Overturning Circulation may unfold at twice the rate of the more famous North Atlantic counterpart.

A slowdown could reduce how much oxygen and carbon dioxide the ocean absorbs and leave vital nutrients at the seafloor. Less oxygen and fewer nutrients would have major consequences for marine ecosystems and climate regulation.

### Melting giants

The West Antarctic Ice Sheet, as well as some regions of East Antarctica, are now losing ice and contributing to sea level rise. Ice loss has increased sixfold since the 1990s.

The West Antarctic Ice Sheet alone has enough ice to raise global sea levels by more than five metres – and scientists warn we could be nearing the point where this ice sheet could collapse even without substantial further warming, though this might take centuries to millennia.

These enormous ice sheets represent the risk of a global tipping point.

They contribute the greatest uncertainty to projections of future sea level rise because we don't know just how quickly they could collapse.

Worldwide, at least 750 million people live in low-lying areas near the sea. Rising sea levels threaten coastal infrastructure and communities globally.

### Wildlife and ecosystems under threat

Antarctica's biological systems are also undergoing sudden shifts. Ecosystems both under the sea and on land are being reshaped by warming temperatures, unreliable ice conditions and human activity, bringing pollution and the arrival of invasive species.

It's essential to protect these ecosystems through the Antarctic Treaty, including creating protected areas of land and sea and restricting some human activities. But these conservation measures won't be enough to ensure emperor penguins and leopard seals survive. That will require decisive global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

### Which future?

Antarctica is often seen as a symbol of isolation and permanence. But the continent is now changing with disturbing speed – much faster than scientists anticipated.

These abrupt changes stem largely from the extra heat trapped by decades of unchecked greenhouse gas emissions. The only way to avoid further abrupt changes is to slash emissions rapidly enough to hold warming as close to 1.5°C as possible.

Even if we achieve this, much change has already been set in motion. Governments, businesses and coastal communities must prepare for a future of abrupt change. What happens in Antarctica won't stay there.

The stakes could not be higher. The choices made now will determine whether we face a future of worsening impacts and irreversible change or one of managed resilience to the changes already locked in. *–PTI*

PHOTO: X

## Thailand caps daily online transfers at $1,500 amid scams

**BANGKOK, 21 AUG**

Thai banks must now cap many online transfers at 50,000 baht ($1,537) per day to combat a surge in financial fraud, particularly targeting vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, the Bank of Thailand announced Tuesday. The new rule aims to block large transfers by scammers, enabling quicker freezing of illicit funds and increasing chances of recovery for victims, said assistant governor Daranee Saeju. Transfer limits will be based on customer risk profiles under know-your-customer (KYC) guidelines, with three tiers: under 50,000 baht, under 200,000 baht ($6,147), and above 200,000 baht. Customers with strong track records can retain higher limits. The policy takes effect for new mobile and internet banking users by month-end. *—PTI*

## US fires employee for questioning Trump over Gaza

**WASHINGTON, 21 AUG**

The US State Department has fired Shahed Ghoreishi, a press officer and contractor, after he questioned Trump administration talking points on Israel and Gaza. Ghoreishi, who is Iranian American, was dismissed following complaints from the US Embassy in Jerusalem and aides to Secretary of State Marco Rubio. His draft response opposing forced relocation of Gazans was reportedly rejected, sparking internal backlash. He also objected to referring to the West Bank as "Judea and Samaria". Right-wing figure Laura Loomer claimed credit for his removal, accusing him of pro-Iran ties, which he denies. The firing reflects heightened demands for loyalty in Trump-era foreign policy. The State Department declined to comment, citing internal policy. *—PTI*

## Floods cause Rs 20B damage to Pakistan infra

**PESHAWAR, 21 AUG**

Torrential rains, floods, and cloudbursts have caused infrastructure losses worth Rs 20 billion in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the worst-hit province since 15 August, with 380 reported deaths. An initial assessment by the Communication and Works Department revealed damage to 603 government properties across 20 departments. Battagram district suffered the most, followed by Swat, Bajaur, and Mansehra. Destroyed infrastructure includes 37 schools, 83 roads, 10 bridges, 226 irrigation channels, and 68 water supply schemes. The Irrigation Department alone reported losses of Rs 10.3 billion. Nationwide, 750 people have died in monsoon-related incidents since 26 June. *—PTI*

## NZ to spend $1.6B on army jet amid defence overhaul

**WELLINGTON, 21 AUG**

New Zealand will invest $1.6 billion in new military aircraft as part of a broader plan to double defence spending from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of GDP over the next decade, citing rising global tensions and a deteriorating security environment. The procurement includes five MH-60R Seahawk helicopters, worth over NZ$2 billion, and two Airbus A321XLR aircraft to replace ageing Boeing 757s. The helicopters will be purchased through the US foreign military sales programme, bypassing a wider tender. The current 30-year-old Boeing planes, second-hand when bought, have faced repeated breakdowns during prime ministerial travel.Long trailing its Five Eyes partners in defence spending, New Zealand is shifting its approach amid growing strategic competition in the Pacific. *—PTI*

# Palestinians flee amid IDF's new offensive

### Israel's troops have established a foothold on city outskirts - home to a million Palestinians

**GAZA, 21 AUG**

The first stages of a planned ground offensive by the Israeli military has begun in Gaza resulting in Palestinians fleeing parts of Gaza City.

According to sources, Israel's troops have established a foothold on the outskirts of the city - which is home to more than a million Palestinians - after days of intense bombing and artillery fire.

Gaza City residents described a night of 'relentless bombardments,' on Thursday. "The house shakes with us all night long -- the sound of explosions, artillery, warplanes, ambulances, and cries for help is killing us," Ahmad al-Shanti told news agency AFP. Hundreds of Palestinians in the Zeitoun and Sabra neighbourhoods of Gaza City have left towards the north-western part of the city.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he is "shortening the timelines" for seizing what he described as "the last terror strongholds" in Gaza.

In a statement, Hamas accused the Israeli leader of continuing a "brutal war against innocent civilians in Gaza City" and criticised what it said was his "disregard" for a new ceasefire proposal from regional mediators. Israel has yet to formally respond to the plan. UN Secretary General António Guterres has renewed calls calls for an immediate ceasefire "to avoid the death and destruction" an assault would "inevitably cause".

French President Emmanuel Macron warning on Wednesday that it "can only lead to disaster for both peoples and risks plunging the entire region into a cycle of permanent war".

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) meanwhile said further displacement and an intensification of hostilities "risk worsening an already catastrophic situation" for Gaza's 2.1 million population.

At least 36 people were killed on Thursday in Gaza, and the death toll from deadly strikes Wednesday in northern Gaza rose by another 39, Shifa hospital reported. Airstrikes killed 19 people in central Gaza. *—Agencies*

Palestinians rush to collect aid airdropped by parachutes into Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he is "shortening the timelines" for seizing what he described as "the last terror strongholds" in Gaza. Hamas accused the Israeli leader of continuing a "brutal war against innocent civilians in Gaza City"

## Iran's navy hold 1st military drill after Israel war

**TEHRAN, 21 AUG**

Iran conducted its first military exercise since the end of its 12-day war with Israel, state media reported Thursday. The naval drill, named 'Sustainable Power 1,404', involves missile launches in the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean, alongside drone operations over open waters.

Though routine, the exercise comes amid Tehran's efforts to project military strength. Iran's navy, based in Bandar Abbas and comprising around 18,000 personnel, avoided direct attacks during the June conflict. It oversees waters in the Gulf of Oman, the Indian Ocean, and the Caspian Sea, while the more volatile Strait of Hormuz remains under the control of the Revolutionary Guard, known for intercepting Western vessels and shadowing US Navy ships. *—PTI*

# Russia hammers Ukraine with drones as peace efforts drag on

**KYIV, 21 AUG**

Russia has launched one of its biggest aerial attacks of the year on Ukraine, firing 574 drones and 40 ballistic and cruise missiles overnight, the Ukrainian Air Force said on Thursday, though recent diplomatic push to stop the three-year war is trying to gain momentum.

The attack mostly targeted western regions of the country, the air force said, where much of the military aid provided by Ukraine's Western allies is believed to be delivered and stored. The strikes killed at least one person and injured 15 others, according to officials.

It was Russia's third-largest aerial attack this year in terms of the number of drones fired and the eighth-largest in terms of missiles, according to official figures.

The strikes occurred during a renewed US-led effort to reach a peace settlement following Russia's February 2022 invasion of its neighbour.

US President Donald Trump discussed the war with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska last week, and at the start of this week hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and European leaders at the White House.

Ukraine and European leaders have accused Putin of stalling in ongoing peace efforts, including Ukraine's proposal of a ceasefire and Zelenskyy's offer to sit down with the Russian leader. The Kremlin has reacted coolly to those possibilities.

Zelenskyy condemned the overnight attack, saying it was carried out "as if nothing were changing at all." *—PTI*

A Russian soldier drives a Russian T-80BVM tank near Ukrainian positions in an undisclosed location in Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

### Russian allies Belarus, Iran to boost defence ties

Belarus and Iran signed 13 agreements on Wednesday to strengthen ties in defence, industry, tourism, and science. Presidents Alexander Lukashenko and Masoud Pezeshkian met in Minsk, pledging to counter Western sanctions and pursue a strategic partnership treaty. Pezeshkian said Iran would help Belarus "neutralise" sanctions, citing its own experience. ukashenko offered food and military-technical cooperation, calling Pezeshkian a "friend." Access to Belarusian resources like potash and chemicals may benefit Iran.

## Nikki asks US to mend ties with India to counter China

**NEW YORK, 21 AUG**

Republican leader Nikki Haley has urged the US to prioritise reversing the "downward spiral" in its relationship with India, calling for New Delhi to be treated as a "prized free and democratic" partner, not an adversary.

She warned that US-India relations are at a breaking point and must be repaired quickly if Washington hopes to contain China's global ambitions.

In an opinion piece for Newsweek, Haley criticised President Donald Trump's recent decision to impose 50 per cent tariffs on Indian goods, including 25 per cent additional duties linked to India's purchase of Russian oil, which has strained bilateral ties.

"Few objectives are more critical to the Trump administration's foreign policy goals of outcompeting China and achieving peace through strength than putting US-India relations back on track," she wrote. The Indian-American former US ambassador to the UN warned that undermining 25 years of progress in US-India relations would be a "strategic disaster".

Haley highlighted the disparity in US treatment of India and China, pointing out that Beijing has avoided sanctions despite being a major buyer of Russian oil. She argued that India is essential to efforts to shift global supply chains away from China, with its capacity to scale production in textiles, solar panels, and smartphones.

Haley said strategic location along Chinese trade routes as reasons why Washington must strengthen its partnership with New Delhi. *—PTI*

## Leaking roof, rats: Imran's wife kept in dirty jail cell

**ISLAMABAD, 21 AUG**

Bushra Bibi, wife of former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, is being held in "unlawful and difficult" jail conditions, according to her sister, Maryam Riaz Wattoo. Speaking on ARY News' Eleventh Hour, Maryam alleged that Bushra had to go on hunger strike just to be allowed to meet her family.

She claimed Bushra's jail cell has a leaking roof, exposed live wires, rats, and power cuts lasting up to two days. "Her health has deteriorated – she's lost nearly 15kg – though her morale remains intact," Maryam said.

She added that Bushra had been denied bail and had not been allowed to meet her husband, Imran Khan, who also remains in jail. The claims come amid allegations from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party of political victimisation.

**Pak SC gives Imran bail**

Pakistan's Supreme Court granted Khan bail in eight cases linked to the 9 May, 2023 violence. The riots erupted after his arrest in Islamabad, with his supporters accused of vandalism.

However, he will remain in jail over other cases. *—PTI*

## US sanctions ICC judges over Bibi warrants

**WASHINGTON, 21 AUG**

The United States has imposed sanctions on two judges and two deputy prosecutors of the International Criminal Court (ICC) for their involvement in cases targeting American soldiers and Israeli leaders, including arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

**US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** announced the sanctions, which target Judge Nicolas Guillou of France, Judge Kimberly Prost, and deputy prosecutors Nazhat Shameem Khan and Mame Mandiaye Niang.

Judge Guillou was sanctioned for authorising arrest warrants against Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant. The deputy prosecutors were blacklisted for upholding the warrants. Judge Prost was penalised for approving an ICC investigation into the conduct of US troops in Afghanistan. The US State Department stated that all four individuals will have any property within US jurisdiction frozen, and US persons or entities will be prohibited from engaging with them. The ICC, based in The Hague, condemned the move, calling it a "flagrant attack" on the independence of a judicial institution mandated by 125 States Parties. Russia Today reported that US President Donald Trump had previously sanctioned the ICC, accusing it of "illegitimate actions" against the US and Israel. *—PTI*

## US cuts intelligence budget by $700M

**WASHINGTON, 21 AUG**

The Trump administration has announced a sweeping overhaul of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), slashing its workforce by over 40 per cent and cutting more than $700 million annually from its budget.

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said ODNI had become "bloated and inefficient," citing politicisation, leaks, and abuse of power. She vowed to end the "weaponisation of intelligence" and restore public trust.

The Foreign Malign Influence Centre, created in 2022 to combat foreign interference in US elections, is being effectively dismantled.

Gabbard claimed the centre had a "hyper-focus" on elections and was misused to suppress free speech. Its functions will be absorbed elsewhere.

The move aligns with broader efforts to reduce federal oversight, including recent cuts to the FBI's foreign influence task force and the US cybersecurity agency. *—PTI*

AFTER CANCER BATTLE

## *'Nicest judge in the world' Frank Caprio dies at 88*

**WASHINGTON DC, 21 AUG**

Frank Caprio, the beloved US judge known globally as the "nicest judge in the world," has died aged 88 following a long battle with pancreatic cancer, his family announced.

Caprio, a former Rhode Island traffic court judge, became a viral sensation through his reality TV show 'Caught in Providence', where his compassionate and humorous courtroom style won hearts worldwide. He presided over thousands of cases from 1985 until his retirement in 2023.

His official Instagram page confirmed his peaceful passing, calling him "beloved for his compassion, humility, and unwavering belief in the goodness of people." His signature style included inviting children to the bench, offering empathy in rulings, and inspiring countless acts of kindness.

Caprio's show earned four Daytime Emmy nominations, including three for Outstanding Legal/Courtroom Program and one for Outstanding Daytime Personality. Clips from his show garnered billions of views on social media, with fans praising his warmth and humanity.

Diagnosed in December 2023, Caprio remained optimistic, recently thanking supporters from his hospital bed for their "prayers, love, and support."

His son, David Caprio, urged fans to honour his memory by spreading kindness. The show's producers, Debmar-Mercury, praised his "unique brand of compassion and common-sense approach."

Caprio is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Joyce, their five children, seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. *—ANI*

## Microsoft workers protest over Israel ties, 18 held

**WASHINGTON, 21 AUG**

Police arrested 18 people during a worker-led protest at Microsoft's Redmond headquarters on Wednesday, amid growing employee pressure for the company to sever ties with the Israeli military over its role in the Gaza war.

The two-day protest, organised by the "No Azure for Apartheid" group, demanded an immediate end to Microsoft's business with Israel. While Tuesday's demonstration ended peacefully, police said Wednesday's protesters became "aggressive" and refused to leave after being declared trespassers. Red paint resembling blood was splattered on Microsoft's landmark logo sign.

The arrests included charges of trespassing, resisting arrest, obstruction, and malicious mischief. It remains unclear how many of those arrested were Microsoft employees.

Microsoft last week announced an "urgent review" of claims that the Israeli Defence Forces used its Azure cloud platform to store phone data gathered via mass surveillance in Gaza and the West Bank—allegedly violating the company's terms of service. Law firm Covington & Burling will lead the investigation.

An earlier AP report highlighted Microsoft's close partnership with Israel's defence ministry and its AI-powered intelligence tools. Microsoft denied its technology was used to target civilians but did not publish its internal review. *—PTI*

Protesters block a road during a protest calling for Israel to reverse its decision to take over Gaza City in Jerusalem **PHOTO: PTI**

## Gold climbs by Rs 600 to Rs 1,00,620/10g

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Gold prices climbed Rs 600 to Rs 1,00,620 per 10g in the national capital on Thursday amid fresh buying by stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 1,00,020 per 10g on Wednesday. In the national capital, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 500 to Rs 1,00,200 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. The precious metal had closed at Rs 99,700 per 10g in the previous session. In addition, silver prices surged by Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,14,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. Spot gold was trading 0.28 per cent lower at USD 3,339.04 per ounce. *—PTI*

## Rupee falls by 18P, closes at 87.25 against USD

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day lower by 18 paise at 87.25 (provisional) against US dollar on Thursday, on a strong American currency and a recovery in crude oil prices. Forex traders said, rupee opened on a positive note with the rise in risk appetite in the global markets amid easing tensions over trade tariffs and hopes of truce between Russia and Ukraine. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened on a positive note at 87.04, then touched an early high of 86.93 and an intraday low of 87.27 against the US dollar. The domestic unit settled for the day at 87.25 (provisional), registering a decline of 18 paise over its previous close. *—PTI*

# Sebi hints at regulated platform for pre-IPO firms

### Sebi to increase tenure & maturity of equity derivatives products

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

Markets regulator Sebi Chairperson **Tuhin Kanta Pandey** on Thursday suggested introducing a regulated platform for pre-IPO (initial public offering) share trading, potentially replacing existing grey market operations.

This new platform may permit investors to trade shares in a regulated environment in the three-day period between IPO allotment and listing. Also, this initiative may replace the existing unregulated grey market, which currently operates during this period.

At the same time, Pandey said that Sebi is looking to increase the tenure and maturity of equity derivatives products in a calibrated manner. This would curb trading in such products, where 91 per cent of individual traders incurred losses in FY25.

Speaking at the FICCI Capital Market Conference 2025, Sebi chief said pre-listing information is often not enough for investors to make an investment decision.

The initiative, if implemented, will potentially curb trading of unlisted shares on unregulated platforms, often called grey market.

- The initiative, if implemented, will potentially curb trading of unlisted shares on unregulated platforms, often called grey market

Currently, there is a gap of at least three trading days when the IPO closes for subscription and opens for trading, and during this period trading in the grey market happens.

In the unlisted space, which largely remains unregulated, is getting a lot of traction among investors despite carrying significant risk for a lot of investors.

The remarks come at a time when the Indian IPO market has become very active with the listing of 48 main-board companies so far in 2025.

On equity derivatives, Sebi is seeking ways to deepen cash equity markets, while enhancing the quality of derivatives through longer-tenure products.

He said that volumes in the cash market have grown rapidly, doubling in terms of daily traded volumes over a three-year period.

Also, he emphasised that equity derivatives play a crucial role in capital formation, but the regulator needs to ensure quality and balance. *—PTI*

**BAN ON MONEY-BASED GAMES**

# Gaming not just play, it is livelihood: E-Sports body

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

A day after the Lok Sabha passed the Online Gaming Bill, the Esports Players Welfare Association (EPWA) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking reconsideration of the Bill, which aims to promote online social games while prohibiting money-based gaming services.

In its letter, EPWA expressed gratitude to government for recognizing the importance of regulation in a growing industry but flagged concerns over the "blanket ban" on Money Games.

The association, which represents a wide community of professional gamers, esports athletes, chess players, streamers, developers, and tournament organizers, argued that the current form of the bill does not distinguish between games of skill and games of chance.

It stated, "We are writing to you with a humble request to consider that the blanket ban proposed under the new Online Gaming Bill raises serious concerns for our community and the future of Indian skill-based gaming".

According to EPWA, this lack of differentiation threatens to derail the livelihoods of lakhs of Indians who earn through competitive esports, coaching, streaming, sponsorships, content creation, and organizing digital events.

"For lakhs of Indians, gaming is not just play, it is work and our livelihood," it stated.

The association highlighted four major concerns, the threat to gamer livelihoods, misclassification of skill-based games, the risk of users shifting to illegal offshore platforms, and the potential setback to India's growing global presence in esports.

The letter also added "We are not opposed to regulation. We welcome it. But we urge the Government to avoid a one-size-fits-all ban." *—ANI*

**2,098 STOCKS ADVANCE**

# Markets extend winning streak to sixth day

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

Stock markets extended the winning run to the sixth consecutive day on Thursday, with benchmark Sensex closing higher by nearly 143 points on buying in blue-chip shares ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 142.87 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 82,000.71 in a restricted trade. During the day, it rallied 373.33 points or 0.45 per cent to 82,231.17. As many as 14 Sensex shares closed higher, while 16 ended with losses.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 33.20 points or 0.13 per cent to 25,083.75.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro and Bharat Electronics were the major gainers. However, Power Grid, Eternal, Hindustan Unilever and Adani Ports were among the laggards.

Gains in pharma, realty, and financials shares supported the rally while profit-taking in FMCG, energy, and auto shares capped gains.

Market experts stated that the proposed GST reforms and a recent credit rating upgrade have bolstered investors' confidence. Investors also turned their attention towards US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's forthcoming statements at the Jackson Hole Symposium.

The BSE smallcap gauge ended flat, ending marginally higher by 0.01 per cent. The midcap index dipped 0.12 per cent.

Power, commodities, consumer discretionary, FMCG, utilities and auto were among the laggards.

As many as 2,098 stocks advanced while 1,995 declined and 155 remained unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

## Rapido fined ₹10L for 'guaranteed auto' ad

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a Rs 10 lakh fine on ride-hailing platform Rapido for misleading advertising and unfair trade practices, the Consumer Affairs Ministry announced on Thursday.

The action followed Rapido's promotional campaign promising "Auto in 5 minutes or Get Rs 50" and "Guaranteed Auto". The promised Rs 50 compensation was Rapido coins, redeemable only on bike rides and expiring within seven days. Disclaimers were displayed in tiny, unreadable fonts, and critical terms were concealed.

Moreover, while adverts implied a Rapido-backed guarantee, the fine print stated that the assurance was provided by individual drivers, shifting liability away from the company.

Complaints surged to 1,224 between June 2024 and July 2025, up from 575 in previous 14 months.

The CCPA found Rapido violating 2022 Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements, which mandate clear disclaimers & prohibit concealing material information. Rapido has been ordered to immediately discontinue the misleading campaign and reimburse affected customers. *—PTI*

## US smartphone exports: India surpasses China

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

India has achieved a significant milestone by overtaking China in smartphone exports to the US, as highlighted in a recent social media post by the Press Information Bureau (PIB), citing research firm Canalys. The post stated, "As a result of schemes like Make in India and PLI, India is now moving at a new pace in those industrial sectors in which it was never even considered a key manufacturer before."

In the second quarter of 2025, the share of smartphones made in India and those imported to the US rose to 44 per cent, up from 13 per cent during the same period in 2024, while China's share plummeted from 61 per cent to just 25 per cent.

Ministry of Electronics & IT recently outlined the seismic transformation in India's electronics sector, revealing a rise in electronics exports from Rs 38,000 crore to Rs 3.27 lakh crore from 2014-15 to 2024-25. Production surged from Rs 18,000 crore to Rs 5.45 lakh crore in same timeframe, showing growing self-reliance in production. *—ANI*

## Air India, AI Express reports Rs 9,568 crore pre-tax loss

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Tata Group-owned Air India and Air India Express together posted a pre-tax loss of Rs 9,568.4 crore in March 2025, according to provisional data from Civil Aviation Ministry. Air India recorded a loss of Rs 3,890.2 crore, while its low-cost subsidiary Air India Express, which had long been profitable, reported a higher loss of Rs 5,678.2 crore.

Among other airlines, Akasa Air reported a loss of Rs 1,983.4 crore and SpiceJet suffered a smaller loss of Rs 58.1 crore. In contrast, IndiGo remained the standout performer with a pre-tax profit of Rs 7,587.5 crore in the same period. *—PTI*

## INDIA'S FIRST AI LEGISLATORS FORUM LAUNCHED

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Future Shift Labs has launched the Artificial Intelligence Legislators' Forum (AILF), India's first initiative aimed at equipping Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) with the knowledge to shape policies surrounding Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The initiative seeks to bridge the gap between India's burgeoning AI sector and legislative frameworks.

The forum aims to address the critical intersection between AI advancements and legislative preparedness, facilitating discussions among lawmakers, technologists, and policy experts on ethical frameworks and regulatory challenges in AI adoption. *—ANI*

## Foxconn moves India head V Lee to Chairman's office

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Apple vendor Foxconn has elevated India Representative V Lee to the chairman's office with new responsibilities and has appointed Robert Wu as his successor to lead operations in the country.

Wu was the CEO of Foxconn subsidiary Sharp Corp in Japan, and his appointment as India Representative is effective from the present week.

Foxconn India Representative is the company's most senior official role reporting to Headquarters.

Under Lee, Foxconn India business crossed USD 20 billion, and its headcount grew close to 80,000 people.

According to a social media post, Lee has been appointed Assistant Vice President in the Chairman's Office, as Business Development at Hon Hai Technology Group. Lee served as India Representative for over 4 years.

Wu has joined as India Representative at a time when the electronics manufacturing segment in the country is going through an uncertain period due to US tariffs and informal restrictions imposed by China on India. *—PTI*

## GoM supports Centre's GST reforms

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: FREEPIK

A panel of ministers from different states on Thursday in principle approved the Centre's proposed sweeping GST reforms through rate cuts, but some opposition-ruled states wanted to know the revenue loss from the move and how that would be bridged.

The Group of Ministers, headed by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, discussed the Centre's proposal of reducing the number of slabs under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) to 2 (5 and 18 per cent) from 4 (5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent). The Centre has also proposed a 40 per cent rate for 5-7 select goods.

While the GoM was in favour of rate and slab rejig if it benefited common man, some members wanted ultraluxury items, to be subject to an additional levy on top of special 40 per cent tax.

Recommendations of the six-member panel, which has 3 members from BJP-ruled states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and an equal number from opposition-ruled states of Karnataka (Congress), Kerala (Left Front) and West Bengal (TMC), will go to the high-powered GST Council, which will take final call on the reforms. *—PTI*

**HIGHER DATA BENEFITS**

## *'Jio has cheapest offers among other telecoms'*

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

Reliance Jio continues to be the most affordable option for mobile users compared to other telecom operators in India, according to a plan analysis report by BNP Paribas.

The report highlighted that while all three major telecom operators, Jio, Airtel, and Vodafone Idea (Vi), have aligned their pricing for popular recharge plans, Jio still offers higher data benefits at the same price points.

It stated, "Charges from all three operators for the 28-day plan will be Rs 299, with Jio still offering higher data limits versus competition. This is similar to what we have seen in the annual plans earlier, with popular plans at Rs 3,599, in which Jio offers 2.5GB/day versus Airtel/VIL at 2GB/day."

This makes Jio a more cost-effective option for data-heavy customers.

Among the available plans, the Rs 799 plan offering 1.5 GB of data per day for 84 days remains widely accessible.

On the other hand, the Rs 249 plan is now only available at physical Jio Stores and cannot be availed online. The Rs 209 plan is available exclusively on the MyJio app.

For voice-only users, Jio continues to offer the Rs 189 plan, which includes unlimited voice calls and SMS with a validity of 28 days, along with 2 GB of data. For data customers, the company has kept multiple options across different price points.

The analysis also pointed out that Jio customers enjoy a Rs 50 advantage per month when compared to similar plans from Airtel and Vi.

Overall, the report pointed out that Jio's pricing strategy is providing customers with better data value at lower costs making it as the cheapest operator among India's leading telecom players. *—ANI*

## 'FIRST EVER SEMICONDUCTOR CHIP OUT BY DEC'

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

India is set to launch its first-ever 'Made in India' semiconductor chip by December 2025, according to Jitin Prasada, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology.

This milestone marks a significant step in developing India's burgeoning semiconductor ecosystem.

The Indian government has initiated the Semicon India programme, allocating Rs 76,000 crore to foster a robust semiconductor and display manufacturing sector.

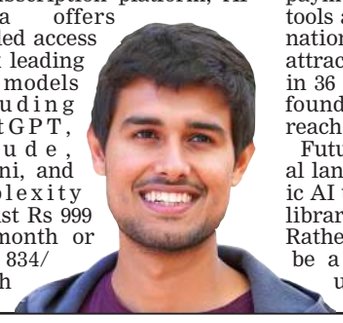
The initiative includes a fiscal support scheme covering 50 per cent of project costs for setting up various semiconductor facilities, including Silicon Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor (CMOS) fabs and Display fabs. *—ANI*

## Dhruv Rathee, TagMango launch India's 1st AI super-app

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

In a landmark move for India's startup and creator economy, YouTube's biggest Indian creator Dhruv Rathee has partnered with TagMango founders Mohammad Hasan and Divyanshu Damani to launch AI Fiesta a subscription-based AI super-app that generated USD 3 million in annual recurring revenue (ARR) within 36 hours of launch.

Billed as India's first global AI subscription platform, AI Fiesta offers bundled access to six leading AI models including ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity for just Rs 999 per month or Rs 834/ month on an annual plan. In comparison, subscribing individually could cost around Rs 6,800 per month (₹81,600 annually), saving users Rs 70,000+ each year.



AI Fiesta also supports UPI payments, making global AI tools accessible without international cards. The platform attracted 20,000+ paying users in 36 hours and leverages the founders' 300M+ audience reach for rapid growth.

Future plans include regional language support, automatic AI upgrades, a 3,000-prompt library, and an iOS app. As Rathee puts it, "AI shouldn't be a luxury it should be a utility." *—Agencies*

# Iyer to replace Rohit as India's new ODI captain

Shreyas Iyer and Rohit Sharma
PHOTO: PTI

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

According to sources, the selectors see Shreyas Iyer as a long-term replacement for Rohit Sharma, as far as captaincy is concerned. On Thursday, Iyer was snubbed by the selectors from India's 15-man Asia Cup squad, which saw the return of Shubman Gill to the T20I side.

Gill was also named vice-captain for the tournament and will deputise Suryakumar Yadav during the continental event. It has now been learnt that Gill, who recently began his reign as Test captain, is also set to take over the leadership mantle from Suryakumar in the format., The decision on India's ODI team could come as soon as after the Asia Cup, which is scheduled to be played from September 9-28 in the UAE. In addition, both Rohit and Virat Kohli will be allowed to take a call on their ODI future. The selectors also want to free Rohit from the captaincy burden., Reports have been circulating that Rohit and Virat could play their final ODIs during the upcoming white-ball tour of Australia., Indian cricket runs on narratives and currently it is about whether Kohli, 36, and Rohit, 38, with a cumulative 25, could continue playing till the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Virat and Rohit are two of the finest ODI players produced by India, with Virat having made 14, with 51 centuries and 74 fifties. His best score is 183., On the other hand, Rohit has scored 11, with 32 centuries and 59 fifties and a best score of 264. 000-plus runs, 181 runs in 302 matches and 290 innings at an average of 57.88, 168 runs in 272 matches and 265 innings at an average of 48.76 —*PTI*

# Women's Hockey AC 2025: Salima named captain

## India will play their final pool-stage match against Singapore

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

Seasoned midfielder Salima Tete was on Thursday retained as captain of a 20-member Indian women's hockey team for the Asia Cup to be held in Hangzhou, China, from September 5 to 14.

The tournament assumes added significance as the winner will secure a direct berth in the 2026 FIH Women's Hockey World Cup.

India has been drawn in Pool B, where it will face Japan, Thailand, and Singapore. The team will open its campaign against Thailand on 5 September, followed by a clash with Japan on 6 September.

India will play their final pool-stage match against Singapore on 8 September.

"We are excited about the squad we have selected for the women's Asia Cup in Hangzhou," Chief Coach Harendra Singh said in a press release issued by Hockey India.

The 27-year-old Salima has been an integral part of the team for a while after being appointed captain last year.

Salima Tete
PHOTO: PTI

"The group has been training with great intensity, and we have tried to strike the right balance between experienced campaigners and young talent," Singh said.

"Our focus will be on playing an aggressive and disciplined brand of hockey, and we believe this team can compete strongly against the best in Asia," he added.

Emphasising the stakes, Singh said the side cannot afford a misstep in any of the matches.

"Every match will test our composure, fitness, and tactical execution. The players are motivated to rise to the occasion, and we are confident of delivering performances that make India proud." —*PTI*

**INDIA'S SQUAD FOR WOMEN'S ASIA CUP**

**GOALKEEPERS**: 1. Bansari Solanki, 2. Bichu Devi Kharibam

**DEFENDERS**: 3. Manisha Chauhan, 4. Udita, 5. Jyoti, 6. Suman Devi Thoudam, 7. Nikki Pradhan, 8. Ishika Chaudhary

**MIDFIELDERS**: 9. Neha, 10. Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, 11. Salima Tete, 12. Sharmila Devi, 13. Lalremsiami, 14. Sunelita Toppo

**FORWARDS**: 15. Navneet Kaur, 16. Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, 17. Beauty Dungdung, 18. Mumtaz Khan, 19. Deepika, 20. Sangita

**AHEAD OF RANJI TROPHY**

# Rahane steps down as Mumbai captain

**MUMBAI, 21 AUG**

Veteran India batter Ajinkya Rahane on Thursday stepped down from his position as Mumbai captain ahead of the upcoming Ranji Trophy season, saying it is the right time to groom a new leader.

The 37-year-old, who has amassed 14000 runs in 201 first-class matches, however, will continue to play as a batter in the team. The Ranji season begins on October 15, and Mumbai will be up against Jammu and Kashmir in their opening game.

Ajinkya Rahane
PHOTO: PTI

"Captaining and winning the championships with the Mumbai team has been an absolute honour," Rahane wrote on his 'X' account.

"With the new domestic season ahead, I believe it is the right time to groom a new leader, and hence, I have decided not to continue in the captaincy role.

"I remain fully committed to giving my best as a player, and will continue my journey with MCA to help us win more trophies, looking forward to the season," he added.

Under his captaincy, Mumbai clinched the Ranji Trophy title in the 2023–24 season with a victory over Vidarbha in the final.

He also guided the team to triumph in the Irani Cup 2024–25, overcoming the Rest of India (ROI) side. —*PTI*

# VISHAL TK BREAKS MEN'S 400M NATIONAL RECORD

Vishal Thennarasu
PHOTO: PTI

**CHENNAI, 21 AUG**

Tamil Nadu quarter-miler Vishal Thennarasu Kayalvizhi on Thursday smashed the men's 400m national record while winning gold with a time of 45.12 seconds on the second day of the National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships here on Thursday.

The 21-year-old ran a stunning race to leave his rivals way behind at the finishing line to cement his status as the numero uno quarter-miler of the country. He bettered the previous national record of 45.21 seconds, which was in the name by Muhammed Anas since 2029.

Vishal's earlier best was 45.57 seconds while finishing fourth at the 2025 Asian Championships in May in South Korea, where he was a member of India's gold-winning mixed 4x400m relay team and silver-winning men's 4x400m relay quartet.

With his 45.12 seconds timing after a scorching run, Vishal became the fourth fastest Asian 400m runner of the season, behind Yuki Joseph Nakajima (44.84 seconds) of Japan, Ammar Ismail Ibrahim (44.90 seconds) of Qatar, and Liukai Liu (45.06 seconds) of China.

He, though, was well behind the automatic World Championships qualification time of 44.85 seconds.

Seasoned Rajesh Ramesh, also of Tamil Nadu, was second with 46.04 seconds, while Haryana's Vikrant Panchal was third with 46.17 seconds.

Vishal has been on a meteoric rise in his short career, which began in 2022. He began running individual 400m races only in 2024, with 46.77 seconds being the best of that year. This year, he rose to become the country's premier quarter-miler, winning the Federation Cup National Championships title in April with a time of 46.19 seconds. —*PTI*

# India to play AC but 'no' bilateral sporting ties with Pak: Sports Ministry

**NEW DELHI, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

India and Pakistan won't engage in any bilateral sporting clash, but the cricket team will not be stopped from playing the multi-lateral Asia Cup next month, the Sports Ministry said on Thursday.

The ministry unveiled the new policy with regard to India's international engagements with emphasis on Pakistan.

Sources said it is effective immediately."India's approach to sports events involving Pakistan reflects its overall policy in dealing with that country," states the ministry policy."Insofar as bilateral sports events in each other's country are concerned, Indian teams will not be participating in competitions in Pakistan. Nor will we permit Pakistani teams to play in India," it added.However, the multilateral engagements will not be affected."We will not stop the Indian cricket team from playing in the Asia Cup as it is multilateral," the ministry source said."But Pakistan will not be allowed on Indian soil for bilateral competitions. But we will not stop them from multilateral events as we will abide by the Olympic Charter," he added. —*PTI*

# Gukesh held by Sevian, Pragg draws with Abdusattorov

**ST. LOUIS, 21 AUG**

PHOTO: PTI

World champion D Gukesh was held to a draw by the lone wild card Samuel Sevian of the United States, while fellow Indian R Praggnanandhaa also split the point with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the third round of the Sinquefield Cup here.

With his second draw in as many days, Praggnanadhaa remained in the leading group of three players that now includes Fabiano Caruana of the United States, besides the overnight co-leader, Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian. Caruana handed Alireza Firouzja of France his first loss in the tournament in the lone decisive game of the day. Aronian was held to a draw by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France, while another American, Wesley So, split the point with Duda Jan-Kryzsztof of Poland.

With six rounds still to come in the 3,75,000 USD prize money tournament, Praggnanadhaa, Aronian, and Caruana share the lead on two points each, and they are now followed by Wesley, Firouzja, —*PTI*

# KIWSF: Young J&K kayaker Mohsin Ali clinches gold

**SRINAGAR, 21 AUG**

From rowing a 'shikara' at the scenic Dal Lake to winning a bronze in kayaking at the National Games in Uttarakhand earlier this year, young Mohsin Ali Kand's success story has been a fascinating one, and he achieved more glory on Thursday, winning the gold medal at the Khelo India Water Sports Festival here.

The 18-year-old made Jammu and Kashmir proud by clinching the top podium in the men's 1000m kayaking event, clocking 4:12:41 seconds. He beat Odisha's Naoram James Singh (4:14.68) and Mayank of Madhya Pradesh (4:23.28) to second and third spots, respectively.

Mohsin Ali
PHOTO: PTI

Vishal Kumar of Uttar Pradesh won the gold in the canoe singles, clocking 4:30.59 seconds in the 1000m event. Krishna Jat of Madhya Pradesh (4:31.36) bagged the silver while Mohammed Hussain of Jammu & Kashmir took the bronze with a time of 4:32.83 seconds.

Mohsin, a 12th standard student, rows a 'shikara' on the Dal Lake after school hours to earn some money.

After his success on Thursday, Mohsin, the son of a lower-middle-class carpenter, credited the victory to his father.

"My father was instrumental in my taking up water sports," said Mohsin. —*PTI*

# Ajay Singh re-elected BFI president

**GURUGRAM, 21 AUG**

Incumbent Ajay Singh was on Thursday re-elected President of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) for a third consecutive term after his comprehensive victory over Jaslal Pradhan in the long-overdue polls. The elections, postponed by more than six months amid legal wrangling, were conducted in the presence of Returning Officer Rajesh Tandon and BFI interim committee head Fairuz of Singapore, who was sent by World Boxing as its observer. —*PTI*

**MESSI'S ABSENCE**

# *Suarez scores twice, beats Tigres 2-1*

**LONDON, 21 AUG**

Luis Suarez scored twice on penalty kicks and Inter Miami overcame Lionel Messi's absence to beat Tigres UANL from Mexico 2-1 in a Leagues Cup quarterfinal.

After leading his team to victory over the LA Galaxy, Messi did not train ahead of the game on Wednesday.

"We all go off what Messi is feeling. Today, Javier (Mascherano) spoke with him, and he wasn't feeling the best. We preferred not to risk him and take a step back," Inter Miami assistant coach Javier Morales told reporters postgame.

Suarez converted his first penalty after Jordi Alba's cross hit the arm of sliding Tigres defender Javier Aquino. Ángel Correa scored for Tigres, slicing through the defense for the equalizer. Then, the ball once again hit Aquino's arm in the box, and Suarez scored the winner from the penalty spot.

Luis Suarez
PHOTO: X/@ SUAREZ

A late header from Tigres' Edgar Lopez ricocheted off both posts.

Mascherano was given a red card before the second half began. Mascherano was seen talking on the phone and giving instructions after being sent off, which is prohibited per League Cup rules.

"We were complaining about the time. They said four minutes (off added time) and we ended up playing like six," Morales said.

"I didn't see what was going on. To be honest, a lot of things happened on the bench," Morales said when asked about Mascherano giving instructions by phone.

Inter Miami's Jordi Alba left early in the second half after hurting his lower leg in a collision late in the first half.

"We don't have the medical report yet, but from what I understand, he took a hit to the knee." —*PTI*

# Basketball at LA Olympics will start 2 days early: FIBA

**MIES, 21 AUG**

Basketball at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics will start two days before the opening ceremony for those Games, organizers confirmed Wednesday.

FIBA, the sport's global governing body, announced that it has reviewed a revised basketball schedule for Los Angeles, with games set to begin on 12 July 2028, ahead of the 14 July opening ceremony.

It is unclear if the men's tournament, the women's tournament, or both will start before the official opening. A preliminary schedule released last month calls for three basketball games on 12 July and three more on 13 July.

"This adjustment allows the quarterfinals to be played over two days and will also ensure that no game will start earlier than noon, enhancing the overall experience for players, teams, fans, and broadcasters," FIBA said in a news release. Bronze-medal games will be played on 28 and 29 July, and gold-medal games will occur on 29 and 30 July. 30 July is the final day of the Games. Several other sports are also scheduled to start before the opening ceremony. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@ICC

## England announces squad; Nat named captain

**LONDON, 21 AUG**

England announced its 15-member squad for the upcoming ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 on Thursday. Nat Sciver-Brunt, the top-ranked batter in Women's One Day Internationals, will lead the side into an ICC event for the first time. She was appointed the all-format skipper in April. England, a four-time Women's Cricket World Cup champion, will be looking to add one more to its collection, having won it in 1973, 1993, 2009, and 2017. It begins its campaign against South Africa on 3 October in Bengaluru. "Conditions mean we have gone for the extra spinner, and we're lucky to be able to have such depth in this department. It's fantastic to welcome Sarah Glenn back.—*PTI*

## Adli becomes latest player to leave Leverkusen

**BOURNEMOUTH, 21 AUG**

Morocco winger Amine Adli became the latest player to leave Bayer Leverkusen after completing a move to Bournemouth on Thursday. Florian Wirtz, Granit Xhaka, Jeremie Frimpong, Jonathan Tah, and Lukas Hradecky have also left this summer, from the team that went undefeated in domestic competitions in winning the Bundesliga and German Cup in the 2023-24 campaign, but didn't capture a trophy last season. According to a BBC report, the transfer fee was 29 million euros ($33.8 million). The 25-year-old Adli was often used as an impact substitute in the league for Leverkusen, where he scored 23 goals in 143 competitive games, but typically started cup games.—*PTI*

## Errani and Vavassori win US Open mixed doubles

**NEW YORK, 21 AUG**

Sara Errani and Andrea Vavassori defended their U.S. Open mixed doubles title, keeping a traditional team on top of a revamped event filled with singles stars. The Italians beat No. 3 seeds Iga Swiatek and Casper Ruud 6-3, 5-7 (10-6), winning four matches over two days to earn $1 million, a huge raise over their earnings in New York last year in a format that looked nothing like this one. Errani and Vavassori were among the many critics of the changes to the event that shut out every other traditional doubles pairing, but had nothing but smiles and plenty of hugs after building a quick lead in the match tiebreaker.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@PRYCE

## Fraser-Pryce seeks Brussels boost ahead of Tokyo 2025

**PARIS, 21 AUG**

Jamaican sprint legend Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce will headline a star-studded women's 100m at Friday's Brussels Diamond League meet, seeking some improved form just three weeks out from her final world championships in Tokyo. Fraser-Pryce, at the age of 38, has struggled on the track this season to hit the highs that have seen her become a true pioneer of women's sprinting over the last 17 years. Nevertheless, her third place in 10.91s at the Jamaican trials saw her qualify for Tokyo, where she will bid to add to her astonishing haul of medals. Fraser-Pryce, the third-fastest woman of all time in the 100m with a time of 10.60, has won three Olympic gold medals and 10 world titles.—*PTI*